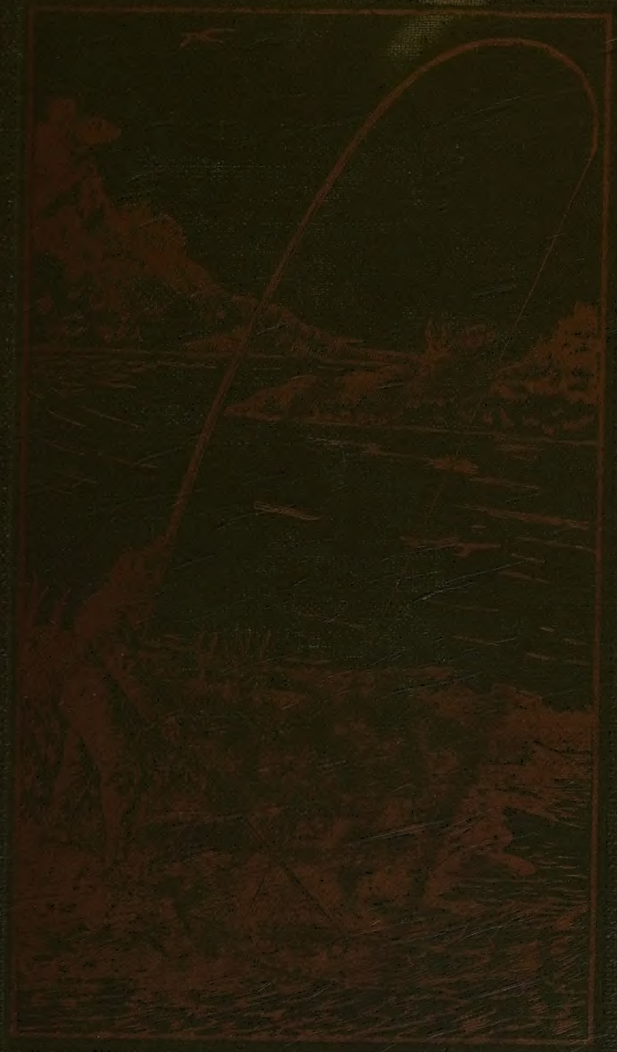

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THE
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THE SALMON RIVERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES. Illustrated.

THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND. Illustrated.

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THE SALMON RIVERS
OF
IRELAND

BY

AUGUSTUS GRIMBLE

AUTHOR OF
"DEER-STALKING" "SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING" "HIGHLAND SPORT"
"THE DEER FORESTS OF SCOTLAND" "LEAVES FROM A GAME BOOK"
"THE SALMON RIVERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES"
"THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND"

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DEDICATED

BY PERMISSION

TO HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY

KING GEORGE THE FIFTH

PREFACE

My readers must not take up this book in the hope of whiling away spare time in the perusal of racy stories of Irish wit and repartee, for there is not a "Begorrah yer anner" in the whole of them. I have perforce stuck strictly to business, for to have related even one half the quaint, funny speeches and amusing stories that have been told me must either have doubled the size of this book or entirely swamped the avowedly fishy intention with which they have been written. Also I have had qualms of telling stories, which though new to me, have perhaps already been better told by others before me.

Neither have I recommended hotels. Most of them were clean, comfortable, and very moderate in their charges; but their comfort so largely depends — indeed, I think entirely depends—on the landlords, that if changes occur in the management the quarters that were delightful in spring may be horrid in summer.

Neither have I recommended ghillies or tacklemakers by name. Of the former an angler can but employ one at a time, and if there are several attached to a fishery, all making their living at it, an angler who gives the name of the ghillie who attended him during his visit and departing lauds him to the skies in print, will only make all the anglers who follow desirous of getting that particular genius, while if they cannot secure him they will think the one that is available must be inferior, although, likely enough, the others are just as good, and perhaps better.

I could not avoid bringing in the names of such well-known tacklemakers as Kelly, of Dublin ; the Rogans,[1] of Ballyshannon ; Messrs. Haynes, of Cork ; Jem Hearns, of Ballina, and Tim M'Carthy, of Waterville, who are *all* so well known that they require no recommendation from me or anyone else.

The success that attended the publication of my four volumes of *The Salmon Rivers of Scotland* (now out of print) has led me to attempt to deal in two volumes with *The Salmon Rivers of Ireland.* Had I realised, before making a start, the pardonable apathy on the subject that exists amongst a large number of the Irish river owners, I should probably have given up in despair, but once having begun to " fish the pool," so to speak, I did not like to halt, so, making up my mind to see it through, I had the pleasure later on of receiving encouragement from many anglers, together with much valuable information, interspersed with numerous friendly hints from such well-known river owners and fishery authorities as Mr. G. T. Shaen-Carter, Colonel the Right Hon. E. Cooper, P.C., Mr. R. W. Hall Dare, the late Earl of Donoughmore, Mr. R. M. Douglas, Mr. R. R. FitzHerbert, Mr. Moreton Frewen, Mr. T. G. P. Hallett, Mr Utred A. Knox, the Earl of Mayo, the late Mr. R. R. Lyon Moore, the Messrs. Petrie, Dr. Traill, and Mr. H. Welch Thornton.

Therefore, although on the whole it has been more difficult to get reliable information in Ireland than it was in Scotland, I yet venture to hope that my kind supporters the angling public will not be disappointed with the result of my labours.

AUGUSTUS GRIMBLE.

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OPEN TIMES FOR RIVERS

River.	Nets may be plied from	Rods may be plied from
The Boyne . . .	12th February to 4th August	12th February to 15th September
The Bann . . .	4th February to 19th August	1st March to 30th September
The Bush . . .	17th March to 19th September	1st February to 30th September
Ballysadare and Tributaries	4th March to 13th September	1st February to 30th September
Bunowen or Louisberg .	1st July to 15th September	1st June to 31st October
Ballinahinch and Loughs	1st February to 15th August	1st February to 31st October
Burrishoole . . .	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
Costello or Cashla .	1st February to 15th August	1st February to 31st October
Clifden or Owenglin .	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
Carrownisky . .	1st July to 15th September	1st July to 31st October
Cloonaghmore or Palmerstown	1st June to 31st August	1st June to 31st October
The Carrick, Glen, or Teelin River	1st March to 19th August	1st March to 9th October
Claudy River, with Lough Nacung and Dunlewey	4th February to 19th August	1st February to 31st October
The Dee and Glyde .	12th February to 20th August	1st February to 30th September

River.	Nets may be plied from	Rods may be plied from
Drumcliffe and Lough Glencar	4th February to 19th August	1st February to 19th October
The Drowse (Bundoran) and Lough Melvin and Tributaries	1st March to 19th August	1st February to 30th September
Dawros River and Lough Kylemore	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
Delphi Fishery . .	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
The Errive . .	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
Easkey or Eske and Lough	1st June to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
The Erne . . .	1st March to 19th August	1st March to 30th September
The Eask and Lough Eask	1st April to 17th September	1st March to 9th October
The Eany or Inver .	1st March to 19th August	1st March to 9th October
The Foyle and all Tributaries	15th April to 31st August	1st April to 10th October
Galway or Corrib . .	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 15th October
Gowla or Owengowla .	1st February to 15th August	1st February to 31st October
The Gweebarra . .	1st April to 30th September	1st February to 31st October
Gweedore or Crolly River and Lough Anure	4th February to 19th August	1st February to 31st October
Glenamoy . . .	1st May to 15th September	1st May to 31st October
Inver, Co. Galway .	1st February to 15th August	1st February to 31st October
The Lennan and Lough Fern	4th February to 19th August	1st February to 31st October
Muingnabo . . .	1st May to 15th September	1st May to 31st October

River.	Nets may be plied from	Rods may be plied from
Moy, Loughs Conn and Cullen . . .	16th March to 12th August	1st February to 15th September
The Newport or Beltra River	20th March to 31st August	1st May to 30th September
Oughterard and Tributaries	None	1st February to 30th September
Owengarve . . .	16th February to 31st August	1st May to 31st October
Owenduff and Tarsaghaunmore	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 31st October
Owenmore, Munhin, and Lough Carrowmore	16th February to 31st August	1st February to 30th September
The Owentocker and Owenea	1st June to 31st August	1st April to 30th September
The Owencarrow or Lackagh River	4th February to 19th August	1st February to 31st October
Spiddal . . .	1st February to 15th August	1st February to 31st October
Screeb and Furnace .	1st February to 15th August	1st February to 31st October
Sligo or Garavogue and Lough Gill	1st January to 15th July	1st January to 15th July

LIST OF ANNUAL CLOSE TIMES

River.	Close time for nets.	Close time for rods, both days inclusive.
Liffey	16th August to 31st January	1st November to 31st January
Dargle or Bray . .	1st October to 31st March	Do.
Varty	Do.	Do.
Avoca	Do.	Do.
Slaney	16th September to 10th April	1st September to 25th February

River.	Close time for nets.	Close time for rods, both days inclusive.
Caragh and Lough .	1st August to 16th January	16th October to 31st January
Laune, Flesk, Maine and Killarney Lakes	Do.	1st November to 31st January
Lee, County Kerry .	14th September to 31st March	1st October to 31st March
Feale or Cashen . .	1st September to 31st May	1st November to 30th April
Deel	No nets	1st October to 31st January
Maigue . . .	17th July to 31st January	Do.
Shannon, Mulcaire, Fergus	1st August to 11th February	1st November to 1st February
Barrow and Nore . .	16th August to 31st January	1st October to 31st January
Suir	Do.	16th October to 31st January
Blackwater, County Cork	1st August to 31st January	1st October to 31st January
Lee	16th August to 31st January	13th October to 31st January
Bandon	16th August to last day of February	Do.
Arragideen . . .	1st September to last day of February	1st November to 14th February
Ilen	1st October to 30th April	1st November to 31st January
Roughty, Kerry Blackwater, Sheen	16th September to 31st March	1st November to 31st March
Currane and Lough Currane	16th July to 31st December	16th October to 31st January
Inny	1st October to 30th April	Do.

THE COUNTY OF GALWAY

The Galway or Corrib River and Lough Corrib.

The Clare Galway.

The Black.

The Bealanabrack and Maam Inn.

The Avonriff and Oughterard Inn.

Spiddal Fishery.

Inver Fishery.

Costello Lower and Upper Fishery.

Screeb and Furnace Fishery.

Owengowla or Gowla and Zetland Arms Hotel.

Ballinahinch, Loughs Derryclare, Inagh, and Glendalough.

Clifden or Owenglin River.

Dawros River and Lough Kylemore.

Lough Derg.

The Shannon in Galway.

Portumna and Meelick.

Suck River, with its Tributaries of Bunowen and Shivena.

THE SALMON RIVERS OF IRELAND

CHAPTER I

The County of Galway

The western part of this county is divided into the three districts of Jar Connaught, Connemara, and Joyce's Country.

In about four and a half hours the Midland and Great Western Railway comfortably convey their passengers to Galway over the one hundred and twenty-six miles separating that ancient city from their Broadstone terminus in Dublin, while for the convenience of those arriving from England, through carriages meet the mail boats at Kingstown Pier. If there was no poaching the whole of this county could well be described as an angler's paradise, for any part of it that is not bog or boulder is pretty sure to be stream or lake; and the fisherman can hardly journey a few miles round the coast of Galway without coming across waters holding salmon or sea trout, although many of them do not contain a tithe of the fish they should do. Numbers of these miniature rivers have only a run of a few miles, but as they nearly all flow from one or more lakes to which in times of flood fish freely ascend, they

consequently assume an importance out of all proportion to their actual size. No matter, therefore, if the angler on his arrival at any chosen spot should find the streams nearly dry, for in that rainy county they will not have been in such a state for long, while the last spate will assuredly have taken a more or less plentiful supply of fish into the lakes, which will give sport until a fresh rainfall comes to bring the river into a flood which will take up another supply of fish.

July, August, and September are the best months for all these streams or lakes, the cream of the period being from the middle of July to the middle of September, though something, of course, must always depend on the weather.

When once a salmon fisherman has arrived in Galway city, he is certain not to quit it without first spending a few days, rod in hand, on the far-famed fishery of the Galway or Corrib River, which, though it drains a vast extent of country, has but a course of about four miles from where it leaves Lough Corrib to its outfall into the sea at Galway Bay.

The Lough itself is an enormous sheet of water spreading over 22,219 acres, which at its northern end is separated by a narrow neck of land from Lough Mask, nearly half the size of Corrib, and flowing into it by an underground channel; while to the north of Lough Mask and running into it at Keel Bridge is Lough Carrah, also of considerable size. Into these three large reservoirs flow some two hundred miles of streams, and thus it is that the Galway River discharges through its mouth the drainage of over twelve hundred square miles.

For the past twenty years both the netting and angling of the Galway River has been in the hands of Mr. T. G. P.

LOUGH CORRIB

THE ANGLING PATH

[Face p. 4

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Hallett, who has spared no pains to improve the sport. It is a very remarkable stretch of angling, some fishers being devoted to it, while others dislike the tameness and publicity of the surroundings, for the angling is right in the city, the walls of the jail rising behind the fisherman. Nevertheless, for those who wade or scramble along the rocky banks opposite to the angling path, there is plenty of hard work and excitement. Then, the whole extent of the fishery does not exceed five hundred yards, the chief angling being carried on from a fairly wide gravel path at the foot of the prison wall, and ending at a bridge a little farther down stream.

All the standard flies will kill, though of course the native tacklemakers swear by their own productions, and it is well to have some of their Goldfinches and other patterns, while here certainly a stock of sea trout flies should be laid in with which to attack the streams or lakes of the county, for the Galway locals tie well and at reasonable prices. In early spring, large hooks, up to No. 3/0 Limerick, may be used, gradually decreasing the size until as summer approaches the very smallest are tried. The prawn, however—which all over Ireland is called "shrimp"—is the chief lure, and four fish are taken by it for every one that is caught with the fly. Formerly, about forty years ago, stroke hauling was the usual method of catching fish, but of late years such a poaching, unsportsmanlike proceeding has nearly been done away with—we say *nearly*, because when the water is very low, fish are so thickly packed together that a leaded prawn is almost bound to hook fish foul, especially if manipulated by the somewhat willing hands of the local professionals. Like all the other rivers of the kingdom, this one has also shown

a decreasing yield during the nineties, which culminated in 1897, the very worst on record.

The Galway River is certainly not over-netted, for each season from 6000 to 8000 fish pass the weirs and King's Gap into Lough Corrib during the netting season, and to these must be added many others that run after the nets come off. With regard to this Gap, which has been abused both for its position and construction, we do not agree with the grumblers. The illustration of the cribs and piers, with Mr. Hallett's house, shows the King's Gap on the right, and in our humble opinion a fairer or better one could hardly be found, and would that throughout Ireland they were all as good.

There is a good deal of poaching on the tributaries, while there are also a certain amount of obstructions, coupled with considerable pollution; likewise the ravages of the seals, otters, and birds are incessant. Nevertheless none of these evils are greater to-day than they were twenty years ago, except, perhaps, that there are a few more cormorants, etc., since the passing of the Wild Birds Protection Act.

As there are two inspectors and one hundred bailiffs employed in the protection of the tributaries with their spawning beds, it may then well be asked why the Corrib River, with many others, should have shown such a persistently decreasing yield during the past decade.

Mr. Hallett attributes this (and no one has had better opportunities of observing, or more fully availed himself of them) entirely to the "dominant drought of the nineties." Nearly every year from 1890 to 1900 has shown a minus rainfall as compared with the ten preceding years. "Now," says Mr. Hallett, "if you have not got water the fish cannot

THE BANK OPPOSITE TO THE ANGLING PATH

[Face p. 6

move about, neither go up nor come down, and the whole condition of prosperity of a salmon fishery is the possibility of fish migration. A drought also has an influence on the pollution. If there is a lot of water the pollution will not go very far, but if there is very little water then it becomes dangerous. The same with poaching; the fish are very much easier poached when there is not much water to protect them. Then there is something more: unless there is a sufficient supply of water high up in the rivers, the breeding beds are uncovered, the spawning ground is diminished, and there is not the same breeding area as when there is plenty of water. Further, in times of drought there is a lack of food supply, which depends entirely on the water, and thus every evil to which salmon are ordinarily subject is intensified by the absence of water. The same with regard to the birds. In our tributary of the Clare Galway mere pools have been left, and they are swarming with birds picking the fry out of the holes, which they would not be able to do if there was plenty of water."

As the rules of the old Galway Angling Club, now defunct, have lately been altered, the ones that are now in force will prove interesting to the anglers of the present day.

PROSPECTUS FOR SEASON 1913.

The angling of the Galway Fishery, annually let for some years to a Club, has, since 1899, been privately let by single rods to approved applicants.

The rules of angling are based on those formerly in force with the Club. In order, however, to give increased fishing ground to each angler, the rods have been lessened in number. Nine rods were always let to the Club, whilst two were reserved by the Fishery, and all have been efficiently used in good water. Since 1899 these nine rods have been reduced to seven, and the two reserved Fishery rods to one. There has thus been a diminution of three rods on the river, or more than one-fourth of the old

number. The conditions given in Rule I., under which, since 1899, this reduction has been made, will apply also to 1913 ; and in any case the two Fishery rods will be reduced to one. As regards anglers' share of salmon caught, this will be the same as formerly, viz., one-third.

The rules in regard to "general rights of angling," "special angling grounds," "special modes, times and places of angling," etc., are practically unaltered. The terms of letting, however, now cover all costs formerly paid by the Club, such as anglers' common room, gate service and fish conveyance to office, expenses for maintenance of walks, etc., etc. ; whilst the "protection of the angling grounds from poachers and intruders by day and by night," formerly aided by the Club, is now the exclusive care of the Fishery.

The Galway Fishery extends from Lough Corrib—the second largest lough in Ireland—to the sea, and its grant dates from before Magna Charta. As a Several Fishery including tidal waters, it commands the entrance to the whole catchment basin of the river. This basin has a catchment area of over twelve hundred square miles, some eight hundred of which are permeated by salmon streams, and of these one hundred and thirty-five miles in length have been estimated as productive breeding ground. The length of the Several Fishery to the sea is about five miles ; but its chief angling grounds are below the weirs, within about three-quarters of a mile from the mouth of the river. These angling grounds are near the town, but in consequence of their closeness to the sea they are daily supplied with fresh run fish in the finest condition for sport and food, and no upper waters distant from the sea could rival them in these respects.

From this proximity to the sea, and the regulating weir across the river, arises the wonderful concentration of salmon above the New Bridge on their way to the upper waters—a spectacle with which most travellers in the West of Ireland are familiar. From these causes, too, the catch of salmon and grilse on the Galway River has always been remarkable as compared with that on any similar piece of water in the United Kingdom. The spring run culminates in April, and the summer run in June. The spring salmon, though fewer in number, are the finest fish, and the water can usually be depended on for good sport. The summer and autumn run consists chiefly of grilse, but with many salmon intermixed, and with a fair supply of water the numbers caught are always very large.

During the last thirty years the average annual catch of salmon by anglers on this river has been over 900 fish. Catches of 20 and

THE CRIBS, WITH THE KING'S GAP ON THE RIGHT

WEST BRIDGE, GALWAY

[Face p. 8

in some cases as many as 25 by one rod in one day have been recorded, whilst catches of from 7 to 10 in the height of the season are frequent. The heaviest fish caught during the last eleven years have been 42¼, 30½, 27½, 36, 36½, 27½, 34½, 29½, 34, 24½ and 18¼ lb. respectively. The grilse weights on an average are between 6 and 7 lb., and the salmon betwen 13 and 14 lb.

Much, almost everything, as regards quantity of fish caught in this river depends on the state of the water. Lowness of water means limitation of angling ground as well as limitation of breeding, rearing, and feeding ground. The lowest catch for the past thirty-two years, with an exceptional failure of the water, was 221, and most of these were large fish caught in the spring. For many seasons past the daily catch of salmon and grilse has been recorded every week in *The Field*, and the particulars for any day may be seen by reference to the heading "Galway" in the angling "Reports from Rivers and Lakes" columns of that newspaper. The following statements of catch apply to the last thirty-two seasons, but owing to the imperfection of the September returns up to 1899, the catches up to that date are given to the end of August only in each year.

Annual Catches from 1881 *to* 1899 *for February–August inclusive,* 11 *rods* :—

1881	608	1891	486
1882	982	1892	1209
1883	1100	1893	221
1884	1034	1894	1188
1885	1134	1895	419
1886	1143	1896	306
1887	993	1897	467
1888	1180	1898	1029
1889	1233	1899	1457
1890	1720		

Annual catches from 1900 *to* 1912 *for February –September inclusive,* 8 *rods* :—

1900	178	1907	737
1901	944	1908	764
1902	1726	1909	752
1903	727	1910	488
1904	1230	1911	576
1905	1575	1912	367
1906	2024		

The Report of the Irish Fisheries Commission of 1900 quotes a "witness of experience" to the effect, "that, taking into account rent and the hire of boats and attendance, every salmon caught by him cost, in the present condition of the Fisheries, £7, 10s.," and adds, "The same witness stated that 10 years ago each salmon cost him in expenses £3." A case might be quoted in late years from Scotland, where each salmon caught cost over £50 in rent alone. But cases of this kind are happily exceptional. Nor must the Irish witness's experience be quoted as applicable to Irish rivers in general. On the Galway Fishery in 1902, taking all anglers and all fish caught, each fish, as far as rod rent is concerned, cost each angler 5s. 8d.; and from this sum must be deducted one-third of its value, which belongs of right to the angler. Doubtless 1902 was an exceptional year of catch, but reference to the above tables will show that the standard of angling costs quoted in the Commissioners' Report has, during the last twenty-seven years, had little meaning in Galway.

Besides salmon the river contains a good supply of the brown, tideway, and sea trout (white trout), all the rod fishing of which will be free to the salmon angler. The Galway district is a remarkably healthy one. The catchment basin of the fishery presents a combination of sea, lake, and wild mountain scenery, exposed to the pure breezes of the Atlantic, and full of interest to the sportsman and traveller. Galway Bay abounds with fish of many kinds, and its shores are frequented by seals. Lough Corrib is famous for its trout, some of which have exceeded 20 lb. in weight, and also for its enormous pike and other coarse fish. Its bogs and islands are the homes of large quantities of wild fowl, and otters are often caught in the river. Its shores and mountains afford good rough shooting,—grouse, partridge, woodcock, rabbits, etc. For change of fishing there is the well-known Ballinahinch salmon and trout fishery, beautifully situated about forty miles by train from Galway in the very midst of the Connemara Mountains, and now provided with the large new railway hotel at Recess. Various other trout and salmon streams, having good anglers' accommodation, as at Cashel, Doohulla, etc., flow down southwards from these mountains to the sea. The whole wild, mountainous district to the west and north of Lough Corrib, consisting of granitic and other primitive rocks, with a specific development of plants and animals, is full of interest to the naturalist, and abounds in historic and pre-historic antiquities.

The Galway Fishery is about fourteen hours distant from London by mail and express trains and boats. Galway, the "Ancient Citie of the Tribes," is an assize town with county club,

hotels, lodging-houses ; and at the neighbouring seaside resort of Salt Hill, about one and a half miles from the angling grounds, a limited number of private houses are let furnished during the summer season.

For further particulars as regards the angling, application may be made to

THE CLERK,
The Fishery Office, Galway,
Ireland.

January 1913.

RULES OF ANGLING OF THE GALWAY FISHERY FOR SEASON 1913

Number of Rods.

1. The number of rods on the river, in addition to one rod reserved by the owner, shall be limited to seven, provided they are all taken by anglers for the whole season. If, however, they are not all taken by anglers for the season, then when the river is in more than average good order, as tested by height of water and catch of fish, the Fishery shall have the right of putting on other rods at its discretion up to the old Club limit of nine.[1]

In this rule two consecutive half-season rods, whether single or joint, shall be counted as one rod for the whole season.

Terms for each Rod.

2. (*a*) By whole and half season :—

During whole Season of eight months, from February 1st to September 30th inclusive .	60 guineas.
During Winter and Spring season of 4 months, from February 1st to May 31st inclusive .	30 ,,
During Summer and Autumn Season of 4 months, from June 1st to September 30th inclusive .	40 ,,
Joint or Partnership rod for two anglers during whole Season	70 ,,
Joint or Partnership rod for two Anglers during Winter and Spring Season . . .	35 ,,
Joint or Partnership rod for two Anglers during Summer and Autumn season . . .	45 ,,

The Joint rod carries the right of consecutive use by its holders and their transferees.

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[1] No extra rods were put on in 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1912.

Thus two anglers, or members of their families, can use the joint rod for alternate days, weeks, months, or any combination of these times, according to mutual arrangement.

(*b*) By Day—

During February	£0 10 0
From March 1st to May 31st . .	0 15 0
From June 1st to July 15th . . .	1 0 0
From July 16th to September 30th .	0 15 0

The angling week extends from Monday to Saturday inclusive.

3. The terms are payment on engagement of rod. Cheques to be drawn to the order of the Galway Fishery, Galway, crossed to Bank of Ireland, Galway; and an acknowledgment shall be returned containing the angler's right of admission to the river. Single and joint half-season rods will be only let in the absence of whole season applications; but every effort will be made to fit together half-season requirements. An application for two consecutive half-season rods by two anglers in conjunction will be at once considered. Rods, if not all let to whole and half-season anglers, may also be secured in advance for any calendar month. In the case of a month's engagement, the payment due shall be the sum of the separate day payments for the month, subject to a discount of 10 per cent.

General Rights and Conditions of Angling.

4. Every angler, subject to the terms of his agreement, shall have the right of angling for salmon, trout, and every other species of fish in the Galway Fishery, extending from Lough Corrib to the sea. He shall have the right to one-third of the salmon and all the trout and other kinds of fish which he catches.

5. All anglers shall show their licenses, and, if required, their right of admission to the river to the river bailiff before fishing.

N.B.—Galway anglers are expected to take out their licenses, when possible, in the Conservators' District in which the river is situated. These Conservators' licenses are £1 each.

6. Every angler shall fish the river in a sportsmanlike manner, according to the recognised principles of his art. Snatching and all other forms of illegal fishing shall involve forfeiture of fishing rights, and will, moreover, subject the angler to the liability of prosecution by the Conservators. In certain states of the river anglers may be required to break any foul-hooked fish or to return it to the water.

Transfer of Rods.

7. Every angler for a whole season, half season, or monthly period shall, under the subjoined conditions, have the right of transferring his rod at any time to a member of his family, by means of a written permit signed by him, with name and address of member together with the date and duration of permit inserted. Such permit shall be sent or given to the Fishery Office for registry, and shall, if required, be shown to the river bailiff before the holder shall be allowed to fish. It shall not be transferable, and shall be given up to the river bailiff when its term expires, or when no longer required. In the case of a joint rod the permit shall be signed by both the joint holders. If at any time a rod is not used either by the angler who has taken it or by his transferee, its use and disposal until it be reclaimed by the angler or transferee shall rest with the Fishery.

In case of an angler being prevented from using his rod by continued illness or compulsory absence abroad, he may transfer it to an angler outside his family, who shall thereby succeed to his rights and liabilities.

In all cases of transfer of rods, as with the original lettings, the Fishery reserves the right of approval, and the name of the angler to whom it is desired to transfer a rod shall be submitted to the Fishery before such transfer is made.

No angler shall transfer his rod for any part of a day on which he himself uses it, unless he is leaving Galway without intention to return.

Of Special Angling Grounds.

8. The angling ground lying between the bridge and the regulating weir and containing the "Drain" shall be reserved from all netting by the Fishery, except—

1st—On the 16th and 17th of February, the commencement of the netting season, for the purpose of exercising and maintaining the right of netting.

2nd—On the occurrence of an exceptional season, which in the judgment of the Fishery renders such netting expedient. Provided that such right of netting the Drain shall be exercised after the month of June, and then on three days only, except by special agreement with the whole-season anglers.

9. Angling for salmon shall be only allowed from the piers and cribs in the close time on Saturdays, and these shall be approached from the left bank of the river. No angling for salmon shall be allowed at any time in the pool under the Weir House windows, nor from the Fishery Yard in general, nor in the pools in front of it and

immediately below it, nor from the bridge over the cribs up to and including the first pier from the yard.

10. No angling for trout shall be allowed from the Fishery Yard, nor in the pools in front of it, nor from the piers and cribs, and generally no trout angling shall be allowed in salmon pools that may have the effect of interfering with the salmon angler.

11. No angling shall be allowed in the waters of the Fishery appropriated to netting and crib fishing whilst these operations are in exercise, nor shall angling be allowed from the public bridges.

12. The Barrack Hole shall be reserved to the owner when in Galway till 11.30 each morning, from the 7th of June till the end of July.

Special Modes, Times, and Places of Angling.

13. Angling may be either by fly or bait. Bait fishing shall not apply to trout, and shall only apply to salmon on certain given conditions.

14. Fly fishing shall not begin before 4 a.m., and shall close at 10 p.m.

15. Bait fishing shall not begin before 9 a.m., and shall close at 6.30 p.m.

16. Bait fishing shall be excluded from—

(1) The left bank of the river and the shallows ;
(2) The high bank near the weir cottage ;
(3) Below the New Bridge,
respectively when the water has fallen below certain given marks.
(4) The Drain in general when the water has fallen below other given marks.
(5) The High Bank near the weir cottage in all cases during the month of June and the first half of July.

17. The Drain, including its left ridge, shall be fished exclusively from the right bank of the river. All fishing shall be excluded from the Drain when the water is below a given mark.

18. No wading shall be allowed when the water is below a given mark.

19. Towards the end of the season, in August and September, if the water continues low, with the river full of fish, bait fishing will be stopped altogether, and late in the season anglers may be required to return to the river any discoloured, gravid or unmarketable fish which they may catch.

20. An angler shall have the right of reserving his position on the river between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. daily, if leaving for lunch or other purposes.

Attendants.

21. Anglers requiring attendants may make arrangements with the professional anglers on the river. The terms are 5s. per day as a maximum, but the engagement or non-engagement of an attendant is purely a question for the angler's personal convenience. Attendants are strictly forbidden to press the purchase of flies, casting-lines, etc., on their employers, and are not to offer advice to anglers unless requested. No attendant shall be admitted to the river without the written sanction of the Fishery, and any attendant disobeying rules, or otherwise misconducting himself, shall be liable to suspension or dismissal from the river. All attendants must be licensed.

Salmon Caught.

22. All salmon caught shall be sent at once to the Fish House and weighed according to office rules. The angler on whose rod the fish are caught shall have the right to one-third of the weight, and two-thirds shall belong to the Fishery. Anglers shall have the option of taking home for use or presentation or of sending from Galway their share of the fish, or of disposing of it to the Fishery at the net wholesale market price of the day, which price shall be shown at the office. In this last case the value shall be credited to the angler's account. Any angler's account, on receipt of a day's notice by the Office Clerk, shall be made out and settled. The angler's right of taking one-third of the weight of the fish caught does not imply the exclusive right of selecting the individual fish taken. Each third fish may be taken in order, or the selection may be matter of arrangement.

In order to avoid the necessity of accounts, etc., a season, half-season, or monthly angler may, if he chooses, take away every third fish caught, beginning with the second. The Fishery, in like manner, may require this condition to be observed. For purposes of record every fish must be sent to the office to be weighed, and no fish, whether salmon or trout, shall be sold in Galway and its neighbourhood.

In General.

23. All rights of angling are held subject to these Rules, and intentional violation of Rules shall involve forfeiture of rights.

Any difference of opinion between anglers as to their respective rights on the river, any question of interpretation of the Rules, and any angling question that shall arise which is not provided for by the Rules, shall be referred to the Fishery, and such reference shall be final.

In case of difficulty on any question of rights and rules or other matters of conduct, the Fishery reserves the power of terminating any rod engagements by repayment of the *pro rata* value of the rod for its non-elapsed period of letting.

The Fishery shall have the right of amending any Rule during the season by the consent of a two-thirds majority of the whole-season anglers.

The word "Fishery" in any of the above Rules, unless otherwise indicated by the context, shall mean the Fishery Owner or his appointed Agent or substitute.

The term "rod" shall mean an angler's right of angling.

The term "Member of an angler's family" shall include the angler's wife, husband, children, grand-children, brothers, sisters, parents, and grandparents only.

The word "salmon" shall include grilse.

By "net wholesale market price" is meant the gross price as shown in the wholesale market telegrams, less the costs of consignment, including carriage and consignee's charges.

In 1899 the three heaviest spring fish taken by the rods were 35 lb., 28 lb., and 27 lb., the average for the whole spring being 14 lb. In April 1902, Captain Palmer killed with a prawn the heaviest fish ever taken here—42¼ lb., while another of 40 lb. with several of 30 lb. were landed earlier in the season. The summer and autumn run consists chiefly of grilse, but with many salmon intermixed, and when the water is in good order the numbers caught are always great. In 1899 the largest single day takes to one rod were twenty-one, fifteen, and thirteen, while catches of seven, eight, and nine a day were not infrequent. In forty instances seven fish and upwards were got by one rod in a day. The largest catch in a week in June was 132, in July 107, in August 91, and in September 112.

Though the run of salmon and grilse in the Galway River in 1899 was, like most of the rivers of the kingdom, much below the average, the total catch for the season was

1395 fish, while the lowest recorded catch for the past thirty years was 214, most of which were large fish taken in the spring. Here are the returns to the end of 1901 :—

Salmon and Grilse

1888	1170	1895	397
1889	1156	1896	301
1890	1657	1897	394
1891	480	1898	1036
1892	1193	1899	1395
1893	214	1900	718
1894	897	1901	944

In our humble opinion there are two small matters that would be an improvement in the existing rules. Firstly, then, surely it would be pleasanter for the angler if he were to keep the first fish he landed each day, or should he catch several, then let him keep the one that weighs nearest to a given weight to be fixed by the Fishery, say 14 lb. for salmon and 6 lb. for grilse. This would probably be a fair alteration of the rule up to the 31st May ; after that date, when the grilse run and an angler may take from seven to ten of them in a day, he ought to be permitted to keep every third or fourth fish. The existing rule by which the fisher takes one-third of the total weight of his catch for the day can rarely work satisfactorily ; either his fish must be cut, which would entirely spoil it for sending away, or in order to avoid the mutilation he must purchase some odd pounds in order to keep it intact. The present rule appears a vexatious and somewhat " finicking " way of dealing with the matter, and if the anglers were consulted probably they would prefer to pay a trifle more for their tickets, as the making of presents of fish to one's friends, especially in the spring, is undoubtedly one of the pleasures of angling. Of course, if an angler is lucky enough to catch

more fish than he has friends he can begin to sell, but as fish are so few while friends are so plentiful, it is indeed rare to hear of an angler making money by his sport, for most of us, thank goodness, would have to take many more fish than is in the least likely in the present state of the rivers before the thermometer of good-fellowship rose to "selling point." Also there is always the chance that this selling business may turn a good sportsman into a pot hunter. We may be old-fashioned, but we do not take kindly to the idea of making our sport pay; of course, if salmon could be made as plentiful in the rivers as pheasants are in the woods, then the fish-selling angler would of necessity be as common as the pheasant-selling shooter, but until that is the case we confess to a feeling of annoyance when hearing of gentlemen who sell the fish they catch.

Our second and final very humble growl (in fact, it is hardly audible) at the Galway management is that we think the time placed at the disposal of the fly fisher is too short, viz. from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. To begin to fish feeling fresh and happy at 4 a.m. each day must mean, except for those on the right side of thirty, a visit to "Bedfordshire" at ten o'clock sharp; while there are very few of us who can rise at 3.30 every morning, for a month at a stretch, without feeling the worse for it, and to the angler who comes to fish the Galway River for a month of sport and relaxation from the wear and tear of a business life this daily early rising must make a toil of a pleasure, while robbing him of the health he would otherwise gain. It is all very well to make these early starts now and then, but to carry them on habitually for a month or longer will, in the case of nine anglers out of ten, counteract the benefits sought to be gained by fine air, exercise, and excitement.

WITH THE FLY—BEFORE NINE O'CLOCK A.M.

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To our mind there is no greater drawback to an angling trip than to feel one is bound to be at a certain pool at an uncomfortably early hour or lose his chance; in fact, one might just as well be going to business every morning and hurrying to catch the train. Therefore, in the matter under discussion I venture to suggest to the managers of the Galway Fishery that it would make more attractive angling and better sport if the baits were prohibited up to 1 p.m. each day, and the starting time deferred until 6 a.m. instead of 4 a.m.

The shrimp fishing is carried on with small prawns,[1] freshly caught and boiled each day, as those preserved in glycerine are useless except in early spring, while so particular are the Galway fish that it has been continually noticed that prawns which have been cooked the day before being used often fail to kill in the hands of the crack bait-fishers; while others coming behind them, though not so skilful, but using prawns boiled that morning, take fish after fish—a strong proof that the Galway fish, like their relations of the Shannon, have their senses of taste and smell more fully developed than the fish of the Scotch rivers, which are cajoled by prawns that have been bottled in glycerine for two or three years, and which as the cork is removed give off such an ancient and fishlike smell as to make the handling of them anything but a pleasure.

The orthodox Galway shrimp tackle consists of but one hook about an inch and a half in length, the point of which is inserted near the tail on the under side and brought out below the throat, while a turn or two of fine orange silk makes the lure last longer. The line is leaded according

[1] These small prawns are pinker in colour, and I think are sold in London as "Margate" prawns.

to the depth of the water, which is never very deep, as the shrimp is essentially a low-water lure. The fresh-boiled small prawns are much more tender than larger ones, or than those preserved in glycerine; consequently they have to be renewed frequently, often after only half a dozen throws, for they are worked with the fly rod and cast in nearly the same way as the fly itself; but surely the substitution of a bait rod with underhand casting would make this tender lure last much longer.

In the hands of the Lydon family—John and Mike and their sons—is the fly tying and ghillieing of the river. Very neat in their workmanship, and supremely confident are they in the fascinations of what they produce. Here are some of their patterns, which they stoutly maintain will beat any Scotch ones; of course, the Goldfinch comes first.

Tag. Silver twist and orange floss.

Tail. Topping and Indian crow.

But. Black ostrich herl.

Body. Two turns of black floss, remainder dark claret floss, silver tinsel, claret hackle from commencement of claret floss, jay at shoulder.

Wing. Canary yellow fibres of dyed swan, three, four, or five toppings over all according to size of fly, blue macaw feelers.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

The Goldfinches are varied by black floss bodies, with black hackle and blue jay at shoulder, and by yellow floss bodies, with yellow hackle and blue hackle at shoulder.

The green and orange and purple and orange are also used, but if the three sorts of Goldfinch are tried unsuccessfully, then it is usually a sure sign it is " all up " with the fly for the moment.

GOING DOWN THE LADDER TO WADE THE WEIR

[Face p. 20

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With regard to Lough Corrib, though large numbers of salmon pass into it, very few are caught, while those that are taken are usually captured at the north end of the lake; indeed, Corrib is more famed for the number and weight of its heavy trout and pike than for its salmon.

Some ten miles above Galway city the lake receives on its eastern shore the waters of the Clare Galway River, the best part of which is owned and preserved for his own use by Lord Clanmorris, and consists of five miles on the right bank with three on the left, the three nearest the lake being one continuous stretch of deep, slow-running water useless for the rod. Above this are some fair pools, but the river is essentially a high-water one, as the fish cannot come up except in floods, at which times, as the water becomes very dirty, it does not come into ply until it has been falling for two days. Very strong winds also soon make the river thick by the wash from the banks. In times of drought the water almost ceases to flow, owing to the numerous "swallow" holes, with a disastrous result to the salmon fry and the angling in general.

Above this long stretch of deep water are some good pools, notably the "Round Pool" at the bend of the river at Lydican; then comes the "Fox Covert," and another below Montragh village, while some two hundred yards on Corrib side of Carraghmore Bridge is also a pretty good cast. Salmon seldom reach these pools before May, although in 1898 Mr. Raoul Joyce, one of the Galway Conservators, killed a spring fish on the 29th of March, the earliest known of for a long time. There are no sea trout, and it is chiefly as a grilse river that the Clare Galway is at its best. These come with any July flood in considerable numbers, for as many as thirteen have been taken in

the day by Mr. Graham, of Galway, though two or three is the average. Salmon run about 10 lb., grilse 6 lb. They lay hold of blue phantoms, eel's tail, and prawns in dirty water, while the best flies are the Goldfinches, Thunder and Lightning, Silver Doctor, with others of the standard patterns. The close season is the same as that of Galway River, and all kelts have departed long before clean fish arrive. Netting begins 16th February and ends 31st August. The rods begin 1st February and cease 15th October.

The next tributary of any size is the Black River, with the town of Shrule on its banks, some seven miles from Lough Corrib shore. It has a run of seventeen miles, but is not of much account as an angling water. Keeping round the head of the lake and passing Cong, where Lord Ardilaun and Mr. Hudson sometimes fish a net, the Bealanabrack falls in on the west side at Maam Inn, after flowing twelve miles through Joyce's Country. It is good for an occasional autumn fish in big water.

A little to the south of this comes Oughterard Inn, by which flows the Avonriff or Oughterard River, where fish are also to be met with in high water at the back end, while also a good number are caught from the lake by the boats from the pleasant inns at each of these places.[1]

We will now take leave of the City of Galway, and, working our way along the coast to the west, we will deal with the principal fisheries as they are met with. To describe every little stream or lake to which *salmonidæ* ascend in times of flood would occupy too much space, for there are fully fifty of such with about double that number of lakelets. Those who wish to get fuller details of these

[1] On these tributaries angling ends on 30th September.

will be able to find out all they require in Galway, Recess, Clifden, or Leenane. A drive of nine miles along the shores of Galway Bay brings us to the mouth of the Spiddal, flowing from a chain of lakes, of which Lough Boliska is the nearest to the sea.

The country here belongs to Lord Morris, who usually lets the angling. The river, though but two and a half miles in length, holds a great number of sea trout with a good few salmon, averaging about 8 lb., though now and then one is got of 10 or 11 lb. The rod and the flies that are good for Ballinahinch will be equally effective here and through all these parts of Connemara.

Though the mouth of the Spiddal is but nine miles from that of the Galway River, up which there are clean fish running in February, March, and April, all of which must pass the mouth of the Spiddal, it is remarkable that this small river has never been known to hold a fresh-run fish before the middle of June, but nevertheless the river is declared open on the 1st of February! As the nets come off on the 15th of August, their season is thus limited to two months, but even during this short period they are only worked spasmodically, and more with the view of providing the house and paying the expenses of the netting than with any idea of making a profit, as for the past three years the take has not averaged 100 fish a season. Forty years ago the father of the present Lord Morris, after supplying the house and his friends, used to sell about £30 worth of fish at 3d. a pound, the fish being netted in the river at a weir that has now been destroyed. Lord Morris attributes the decrease of fish in his waters chiefly to poaching, and the evidence he gave on this head before the Commissioners of the Irish Inland Fisheries Commission

of 1900 is so strong, so clear, and so sensible as to deserve the fullest publicity. Said his lordship :—

" I wish to state after long experience, not indeed in a fishing way, but I went fifty-three circuits through Ireland as judge, and in my opinion there will never be anything practical in the way of putting down poaching unless the Constabulary are to do it, and I look upon everything else as the merest palliative. Poaching is certainly illegal. Why should not the police put down what is illegal as they do illicit whiskey ? No watchers now will be sturdy enough to summon people and make themselves unpopular ; they do not want to get the ' dog's knock ' at the next fair or market they go to. I cannot understand some suggestions I saw about taking the police out of their proper sphere. This poaching is a breach of the law, and what is their proper sphere but to assert the law ? I think both the Constabulary and the Coastguards ought to be instructed to prevent poaching, and that they should be rewarded and paid extra out of the seizures and summonses. In the old days my visitor has often gone out and caught as many as eight salmon with the rod before breakfast, but now people often stay three days with me and are delighted if they take even one salmon ! Once you get into these wild districts, the very places in which they made illicit whiskey, then it is absolutely necessary to have the police. I have heard my father say that when he was a boy he could see, standing on our hall doorstep, the fires of nine stills every autumn evening. Now there is no making of illicit whiskey near me at all, because the police have rendered it impossible ; and as they have put that illegal traffic down, so I believe they could put down this poaching."

On leaving the Spiddal, the Inver is the next fishery

of importance. Mr. Moreton Frewen (that warm and eloquent advocate of State-aided hatcheries—good luck to his efforts !) is the lessee, and, almost needless to say, he has a hatchery at Inver which has been a great success. In 1904 he turned the fishery into a small club, the members then being the Earls Cairns and Warwick, Lords Castletown and Dunraven, Sir John Arnott, Mr. Mansell, and those two eminent raiders, Sir John Willoughby and Dr. Jameson. Maam Cross Roads is the nearest railway station, some twenty-five miles from Inver Lodge. The feature of the fishery is its white trout, which begin to run about the 20th of June ; and Inver, with the adjoining Costello, are perhaps the two best white trout fisheries in Ireland.

In the recently ended season of 1901, on July 30th, Sir John Arnott got 67 trout, weighing 48½ lb., and Mr. G. Cornwallis West, 50 trout, weighing 27½ lb. ; August 31st, Mr. Frewen, 74 trout, weighing 54 lb. ; August 3rd, Mr. West, 60 trout, weighing 43½ lb. ; August 6th, Earl of Warwick, 1 salmon, 51 trout, weighing 38 lb. ; September 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, two rods, 1 salmon, 142 trout ; September 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th, Mr. Frewen, 137 trout, weighing 105 lb. ; while right up to the end of October the sport kept good, and I think I am correct in saying the total was nearly 2000 sea trout.

A few miles after leaving Inver mouth the famed Cashla or Costello Fishery is reached. The river and half the lake are owned by Mr. H. R. Laing, while the rest of the fishery he leases from Mr. Berridge, of Ballinahinch. The Cashla flows from a chain of lakes, divided into Upper and Lower Costello Fisheries. The lake nearest the sea—Gleniemurrin—is included in the lower fishery, and there

is always enough water in the Cashla to take fish to this lake, which has a circumference of about twelve miles, but is never fished by more than two boats with two rods in each. High floods scatter the fish and take them through Gleniemurrin to the upper lakes.

The river has a run of about three and a half miles, in which distance there are just a dozen good bank casts, of which the Rock, Round Reedy, Island, Crooked, Carrick-amore, Cabbage, and Dinner are the best. No waders are wanted, though in times of flood knee boots are useful to those who particularly wish to keep dry-shod. A fourteen-foot rod will cover all the water. For salmon the best months are July and October; sea trout run from about the 20th of June to the end of the season. Though in some years the prawn kills well, the fly is the chief lure; orange and grouse, with a local Thunder and Lightning, are the great favourites. As many as 150 salmon have been got in the season, but the take of these is a fluctuating one. It is on record that Mrs. Laing took nine of 8 lb. in one day, which is the average weight, while a long time further back there is a record of 200 sea trout to one rod in a day. Averaging 1 lb. each, early in the season they are partial to black or grey bodied flies with silver tinsel and mixed wing, while later on they prefer olive bodies mixed with red and blue. Indeed, the sea trout is a much more fastidious feeder than his big relation the salmon, for if in certain rivers and lakes dark bodies kill well, then it will be improbable that gaudy combinations will give anything like such good results. Mr. Laing keeps this fishery entirely in his own hands, though now and then, when unable to stay for October, he has let it during that month.

Half a mile below the Cashla mouth the bay narrows so much that the tides form a salt-water rush, where in dry seasons salmon are often taken with a blue fly, when other baits or flies are of no use. Mr. H. R. Laing, the lessee of this fine fishery, has for the past five years hatched out 200,000 sea trout ova, and is just beginning to reap the benefit of his perseverance, as in 1901 his take jumped from 2000 in 1900 to 2800 sea trout. The best day was 124 to four rods; the previous best day, some ten years ago, having been 125 to three rods. In July four rods had 433 in a week, and many other takes of about that sort were made right up to the end of the season.

The Upper Costello Fishery belongs to Mr. F. R. M. Crozier of 19 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin, and is worked from Fermoyle Lodge, a newly-built stone house twenty miles from Maam Cross Roads Station, which is let fully furnished, with plate and linen. The angling is chiefly in seventeen lakes, on all of which there are boats, while none of them are more than thirty minutes' walk from the lodge. In wet seasons salmon come up out of Lough Gleniemurrin, and as many as ten have been had in a day. There are some miles of both banks of the upper Cashla River with some good pools, for this river joins the whole chain of lakes together. In 1900, 1300 white trout and 20 salmon were captured; in 1899 (one of the worst on record in Connemara), under 700 white trout and only 10 salmon were caught. There is ample room for four rods.

Next comes the Furnace and Screeb Fishery, these two streams falling into the head of Kilkieran Bay, with their upper waters rising near Maam Cross Roads. There are about fifty-two lakes more or less connected with the fishery and having the same watershed. Only ten of these

which are in direct connection with the river are seriously fished; they are good all over, though the "butts," or places where the river enters the lakes, are specially good, some being fished from the banks and others from boats. The best of them are Drumscarriff Butt, Ashleam Butt, Lady's Pool, Cornaree Butt, Corn-a-geerah Butt, Hatchery Pool, and Screeb Butt; while in the salt water of the estuary there are the upper, middle, and lower stands. The best flies are the Black and Claret Jay, Thunder and Lightning, Dusty Miller, Butcher, Black and Silver (a jointed fly), Grey Monkey; small flies in sizes 7, 8, 9 Limerick. The prawn is at times good in the runs, no other bait being of any use. Of late years the take has been about 150 salmon and grilse, the former averaging 10 lb. and the latter 6 lb., although fish of 26 lb. have been got. Salmon run from the 15th of June to the 1st of October, the sea trout appearing about the 25th of June.

This is a high-water fishery rather than a medium one, and works best on a falling water with a fairly bright, brisk day, a good flood keeping it in order for a week or ten days. In times of drought the water is intensely clear. As many as 500 salmon have been taken in a season, when two rods often got between thirty and forty in the day. There is a good hatchery, turning out 500,000 salmon and sea trout yearly.

The brown trout are not fished for systematically, but both bull and brown trout are at times got, some of the brownies going up to 6 lb. The estuary is also full of bass and mullet. The lower lake is so close to the beach that at spring tides the fish are carried directly into it, which makes the angler here independent of rain, Loch Garvey, in Ross-shire, on the Inverpolly shootings, being, we think,

SCREEB BUTT. GEORGIE ST. GEORGE, ÆTAT. 8½
"In him"

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the only other instance of such close proximity to the sea.

In addition to the lakes and the river there are three first-class stands in the salt water of the estuary near the Screeb mouth. Fish are only caught here on the ebb of the tide, when the rapid run tempts them to pass upwards. These stands fish for about two hours, during which time Mr. St. George has often had five or six fish of 6 to 16 lb., besides losing others. In September he also often gets very red fish from this salt-water run, though thickly covered with sea lice.

In addition to the salmon, the take of sea trout varies from 1200 to 1500, averaging a little over 1 lb. Black Jay, Grey Monkey, blue and claret with a mixed wing, and claret and jay are the favourite flies.

This fishery, together with the Furnace, is held on a long lease by Mr. Howard Bligh St. George, who keeps it entirely in his own hands. It will always give sport to four rods, and to double that number as soon as floods have stocked the waters.

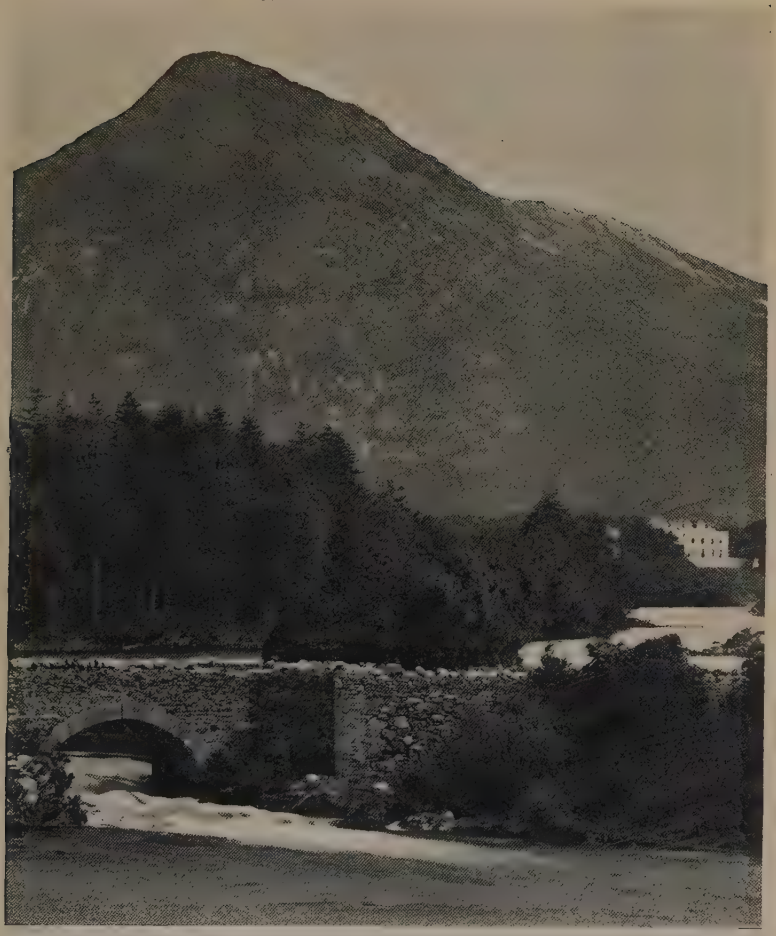
The Furnace falls into the sea a little to the south of the Screeb, and though it has a run of some five miles it is but a small stream and not of much account for the rod, as the fish run up at once to the lakes from which it flows. Of these there are five, two of them large, with very good "butts," although, as Mr. St. George has such a vast extent of fishing at Screeb, the Furnace lakes are not fished at all hard, but twenty-five fish with about 500 sea trout should be got. One rod has often had 30 in the day, some of them weighing as heavy as 5 lb. There are sluice gates in the lower lake, which regulate the water, which can thus be kept in good order for fully a week after a flood,

but it is best at medium height on a dark, breezy day. It will carry four rods, and opens with the Screeb on the 1st of February, and closes on the 31st of October.

Next comes the Gowla Fishery, close to the village of Cashel, on the east side of the head of Birtenbury Bay, and five miles from Ballinahinch Station. Angling is carried on from the comfortable Zetland Arms Hotel, managed by Mr. J. J. O'Loghlen. The weekly fishing ticket is £2, 10s., while board and lodging is 10s. a day. The river is about three miles in length, and limited to three rods. There are also three boats on the large lake and two more on other lakes, so, as two anglers are in each boat, this makes a total of thirteen in all. The rules are nearly similar to those in force at Ballinahinch, while during July, August, and September there is rarely a vacant beat, so that anglers will do well to write before arriving at the "Zetland Arms," so as to make sure of their sport. Quite at the head of Birtenbury Bay, a short distance to the west of the Gowla, is the famous

Ballinahinch Fishery

The river of that name empties the loughs of Ballinahinch, Inagh, Derryclare, and Glendalough, into the head of which last-named lake flows the Recess River. The anglers take up their quarters at the comfortable Railway Hotel at Recess with the station close by, while the journey from Dublin is pleasantly made in some seven hours. The hotel charges are 70s. a week, which, considering the shortness of the season and the excellence of the quarters, is cheap enough. The Ballinahinch River is only a short one of some two miles, and is the property of Mr. Berridge, of Ballinahinch Castle, who also owns the whole of the



BALLINAHINCH CASTLE

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angling of Lough Inagh, which, together with other adjoining anglings, was rented in 1904 *en bloc* by General Beresford, of 76 Jermyn Street, London, who sublets such portions as he does not require for himself or his friends, so that any angler wishing to visit Ballinahinch had but to write to the General at the above address to ensure a courteous, prompt, and explicit reply to his inquiries.

The General's experience, unfortunately, does not differ from that of other river owners and renters, for the angling has fallen off considerably, a sad fact which is also fully confirmed by Mr. Robinson, who for many years has been the agent at Ballinahinch Castle. He remembers that about twenty years ago, when the river was netted fairly hard, and when also there were cribs at work, that then the fishing was far better than it is now. In those halcyon times a fair day with the rod meant from five to ten salmon, with some twenty white trout; at that period Mr. Robinson took from "The Big Rapid" eleven fish in a short day, but now, alas! that famous catch does not give eleven in the whole season. "Coghlan's Point" was another noted throw, so keenly sought for by the anglers of those days that many were content to sleep by the pool for fear of losing their chance, whereas it is now thought lucky if this pool yields even a fish in the day. Mr. Robinson and others who are best able to judge attribute this falling off to the incessant poaching which is carried on just before the fish commence to spawn, while the sea trout are additionally damaged by further raids made on them in the sea, near the mouth of the river, by the nets of the mackerel boats, each one often daily getting from fifty to sixty white trout. During the close time, from 1st of November to 1st of February, there are about sixty watchers

employed at £4 a head (poor enough pay in all conscience !), though as a set-off in the angling season they are all engaged as boatmen or ghillies at 3s. 6d. a day, with their lunch found. It must not, however, be forgotten that these watchers are natives of this district, so thus if they do catch a poacher it will be nearly certain they will either be apprehending a relation or a friend ; consequently the watching is a farce. If half the number of watchers were brought from a distance, and if the police were instructed to assist them in preventing poaching, then the good times would doubtlessly return ; but as long as the bulk of the fish are killed on the shallows of the tributaries before they have spawned, no improvement can be hoped for. In the ten years from 1890 to 1899 the total of the poaching fines came to £4, 3s. 8d., while in seven of those years there was not one single conviction recorded ! Nevertheless, even in these bad times for sport, the angler may do worse than arrange for a " rod " with General Beresford.

Immediately above the river and Lough Ballinahinch comes Lough Derryclare, about three miles in length by nearly a mile in width. These are followed by Lough Inagh, about one mile longer than the others, but which fills and empties more quickly, although a good flood will last both river and lakes for a fortnight without fresh rain, as the lakes do best in moderately low water with a brisk south-easterly wind.

This upper lake of Inagh is limited to five boats, though there is room for more. At the foot of it are the locally famed casts of Cosseeloo (running fast) and Rough Point. Three fish in a day is now thought an extra good take, but with Inagh in order it should never fail to give a fish a day, plus a good basket of sea trout, for as they

LOUGH INAGH

THE SHANNON AT PORTUMNA

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spread themselves all over it, it is the best lake of the four.

Formerly there used to be a fair show of spring fish in March and April, but these have been entirely exterminated. Grilse begin to run in June, followed by salmon and sea trout in July and August.

Lough Derryclare also carries five boats, and is famed for its well-known "Butt" cast, where the water running in from Lough Inagh causes great numbers of salmon and grilse to assemble in the narrows.

On Ballinahinch lake there are also some noted salmon casts, such as the Rock, Snabeg, and Canal Bridge. The Rock is famed for once having given General Beresford a day of fourteen fish; while Snabeg, which fishes best in high water, should yield even nowadays from four to eight a day when in order.

Included in the area of this fishery are several smaller lakes which give good sport. Of these, Lough Glendalough, one and a half miles by half a mile, rejoices in a "Butt" of its own, and is limited to two boats. Lough Attery, about a mile square, is fished by one boat, and the "Two Gormans" yield good sport for another one; also there is one boat on Lough Lhanakheela, while Lough Oorid, one and a half miles by half a mile, has room for two. The Ballinahinch River has thirteen good pools, chiefly cast from the bank, though a few are boated; however, no waders are wanted, while a sixteen-foot rod will do the work. When the water is small, only two rods are allowed to fish, but it takes four when in real good order. "Carrig Vohr" is the top pool, followed in rapid succession by Upper and Lower Plank, Colonel's, Greenpoint, No. 3, the Rapid, No. 5, Little and Big Coghlan, the Rushes,

Eel Weir, Old Salmon Weir, and Poul-na-heira. The gaff may be used from the commencement of the season.

The best flies are Black Jay, Blue Doctor, Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, Grey Monkey, and Silver Grey, sizes 4 to 10 Limerick. All lures are permitted, the shrimp being the best. General Beresford's heaviest take of late years has been fifteen grilse and salmon in an afternoon, while during the whole of one season he averaged 2.75 fish a day. Salmon run from 9 to 11 lb., grilse about 7 lb. Takes of from ten to fifteen have often been got, while forty-nine were once taken from the middle beat in five consecutive days.

Sea trout begin to run from the 20th of June to the middle of August, varying from ¾ up to 7 lb. Sixty-three to one rod is the record take during General Beresford's time. Flies 7 to 11 size, blacks, blues, clarets, greys, olives, and silvers.

There has been no netting of late years. The rod season is from the 1st of February to the 31st of October. For salmon and trout *combined* the first half of July is the best, though of course there are more trout later on, though not so fresh.

This fishing is now mostly let on lease in sections, but free fishing is given to visitors staying at the Railway Hotel, Recess (who rent some of the upper water), and the Zetland Hotel, Cashel. The season now ends on 30th September instead of 31st October, a recent by-law having been passed to that very wise effect. There is no netting; ghillies are paid 2s. 6d. a day and their lunch. Fishing can often be rented on the Castle water at 20s. a day by applying to the manager at the Ballinahinch Castle Estate Office.

Mr. Berridge has kindly sent me the rod catches of recent years, which are as follow :—

	Salmon.	Sea Trout.
1905	124	6003
1906	91	5295
1907	153	5089
1908	145	3794
1909	188	2485
1910	139	3903
1911	99	2757
1912	73	3286

Quitting Ballinahinch, we come to Clifden, on the Owenglin River, but as it does not flow from any lake, and has but a run of ten miles, unless the angler finds it just right it is not worth his while to stay on in hopes of a flood, for there are better angling quarters at Kylemore Inn, some dozen miles to the north of Clifden.

The Dawros River empties Kylemore Lake, and both yield first-rate sport, which at times is sufficient to keep four or five rods at work.

In that charming book, *A Year of Liberty in Ireland*, the late Dr. Peard tells with great glee how, in the middle of one August (we think in 1867), in his first attack on Lough Kylemore, he took from it five salmon, headed by one of 12 lb., together with eighteen white trout, the largest being 5 lb., and over twenty " brownies " of about 1 lb. each—truly a pretty day. Although that happened thirty years ago, the sport still remains good, though perhaps not quite on a par with the score of the day mentioned.

To the north of Kylemore, about half-way on the road to Leenane, there is Lough Fee, drained by the Culfin River, each giving good sport when in order, and easily reached from the inns of Leenane or Kylemore. With

Lough Fee the Galway anglings come to an end as far as its western shores are concerned.

There are, however, all round its coasts many smaller streams, which give good sport with sea trout when in flood. Permission is rarely refused, and the angler's chief difficulty when making an attack on them will be the question of accommodation. On the east and south-east the county of Galway is bounded by Lough Derg and the Shannon, until it is joined by its tributary, the Suck, a large river coming from the north, with a length of eighty-two miles, the greater part forming the county march between Galway and Roscommon. Its waters hold salmon, trout, and pike, but the former are so severely poached that no angler would go especially to the Suck for his sport.

Lough Derg, though salmon are caught in it, is more famed for its daping for trout with the natural May fly, which comes up about the 20th of May to last for three weeks. Trout run large, and will average 3 lb., while they have been caught up to 20 lb., and in good times as many as 100 have been taken by one rod in a day, although nothing approaching that can be expected in these times, for the Lough is hard poached during the close time, and it is to be regretted that there is no licence imposed on the trout rods, which would form the nucleus of a protection fund. Portumna is headquarters for anglers at the Galway end of Lough Derg ; while in the Shannon, between there and Banagher, there are some fair salmon casts, which give a few fish about the time of the May fly season, when the water is right.

THE COUNTY OF MAYO

The Errive River.
Delphi Fishery.
Carrownisky River.
Bunowen or Louisberg River.
The Newport or Beltra River.
Lough Beltra.
Lough Feeagh.
Lough Furnace.
Burrishoole River.
Owengarve River and Mulranny Hotel.
Owenduff and Tarsaghaunmore with Croy Lodge.
Owenmore, Munhin, and Lough Carrowmore.
Glenamoy.
Muingnabo.
Cloonaghmore.
Bunree.
Moy, Lough Conn, and Lough Cullen.

CHAPTER II

The County of Mayo

Proceeding northwards from Kylemore, we soon reach McKeown's beautifully placed and comfortable inn at Leenane, on the shores of Killary Harbour, and it is to the enterprising landlord that the traveller is indebted for the good, cheap daily service of cars between Clifden and Westport.

A few miles beyond Leenane the county of Mayo is entered, where the Errive, or Erriff, after a course of twenty miles, falls into the extreme head of Killary Bay, with Aashleigh Inn at its mouth. It opens for nets and rods on the 15th of February, although no fish are found in it before April. The nets cease the end of August, and the rods continue till end of October. As neither the Erriff nor any of its tributaries flow from lakes, it is entirely dependent on rain; but given plenty of wet weather, then it still yields fair sport. There are six beats on the river, let at 7s. 6d. a day, or £8 a month, the angler keeping his catch.

The falling off in the quantity of fish is attributed by the local fishermen entirely to the havoc wrought by the bag nets outside the Killaries on Achill Island. Before they existed one net with one boat and four men used to get from 600 to 800 fish in a season from Killary Bay.

At the present time it is only by very hard fishing that 100 can be taken.

It is said that clean fish are in the river towards the end of April, but there is no real run until June, in which month one rod in 1901 had five fish in a day, while grilse with sea trout were then showing in good numbers. Owing, however, to its dependency on rain, the Erriff is hardly a river for the angler who cares only for salmon or sea trout; but for those who do not despise the "brownie," then in times of drought, when the river is useless, there are plenty of lakes accessible from Aashleigh which are well stocked, while as a change the sea fishing is first class and the scenery grand; so, to those who are of a *carpe diem* nature, these are excellent quarters.

Continuing our way round the north shore of the Killaries, about eight miles to the west, the Bundoragha River falls into the sea after a short run of a mile and a half. It drains the lakes of Delphi (nearest to the sea), Dhulough, and Glencullen, which together with the river form the well-known Delphi Fishery, perhaps more famed for the number and weight of its sea trout than for its salmon.

From 1883 to 1887 the then lessee, Mr. Wienholt, kept a hatchery which was attended with remarkable success, so much so that the increase of fish was followed by an excessive multiplication of the nets. The larger stock of fish also added considerably to the cost of preservation, which resulted in the detection of many poachers; but no sooner were fines inflicted than the Dublin Castle people remitted them on appeal, which so disgusted the lessee that, "not being disposed to breed fish for poachers," he gave up the hatchery, preferring to have fewer fish with less trouble and expense, all incurred for the benefit

of the poaching fraternity. As soon as the hatchery was discontinued the numbers of the fish began to diminish, while the nets in their turn quickly followed suit.

The Delphi Fishery belongs to the Marquis of Sligo, and is always let; but as no reliable information as to the sport of the present day has been obtainable we are not in a position to say anything about it, though probably, like unto all other fisheries, this one has not escaped the universal falling off, especially as the closely adjacent Erriff River has been such a severe sufferer.

Leaving the Bundoragha, and keeping along the coast, we cross the Carrownisky (twelve miles long), and then arrive at Louisberg and the Bunowen River (thirteen miles). Here Mrs. Girr has a nice little hotel, from which the Carrownisky can be fished by Lord Sligo's permission. The Bunowen River he keeps strictly in his own hands. July and August are the best months for the Carrownisky, September and October for the Bunowen. The nets of the two streams commence on the 1st of July and cease on the 15th of September, while on the Carrownisky the rods begin with the nets and continue to the 31st of October, but on the Bunowen they start on the 1st of June—a month sooner than the nets—and keep on till the 31st of October.

As an example of the daring determination of the poachers of this out-of-the-way district, it may be related that some years ago, when the tacksman, who since the opening of that particular season had hardly had a fish in his nets, happened to be at the mouth of the Bunowen on one Sunday morning, and, seeing a few fish splashing in the sea, he persuaded his men to shoot the net, which when brought to the shore, to his great joy, held more than one hundred splendid silvery fellows. Thinking that he had

done sufficient law-breaking for one day, and delighted with the result he had the nets hung up to dry, while resolving to be hard at work again early the next day.

On coming to the river on Monday morning he found that his nets had vanished during the night, while, maddening to behold, the fish were pushing their way up the river in hundreds. Now, the poachers of the district had heard of the Sunday great haul, so, fearing that the tacksman would get every fish, they stole his nets, which as long as the run lasted they kept possession of, while poaching the river every night and making large takes. As soon as the run was over the missing property was returned to the poles it had been removed from! In this case, perhaps, the tacksman was as bad as the poachers; nevertheless, our sympathies have always been with him, although probably enlisted on his side by hearing a friend relate the story in the terse, strong language in which it was told to him by the unfortunate victim.

Between Louisberg and Newport there are numbers of small streams, but none of them worth devoting much time to, so we will push on through Westport, to make for the pleasant shelter of McDeverell's Hotel at Newport, with its modest terms of 30s. a week.

Seven miles inland is Lough Beltra, parts of its banks being there owned by the late Sir Roger Palmer and Major Knox, and from this lake the Newport River flows, both being free to visitors at the hotel, the boat with the necessary man for the lake costing 5s. a day. No waders are wanted for the river, which when in order gives a certain amount of sport, but not very much, as the fish run through it for the lake without making a long halt. In 1912, which was a dry season and sea trout were unable to ascend to the

lough, in the low clear water of the river they were practically uncatchable with wet fly. Mr. Parke was then renting a part of the river, and one of his guests, Mr. Clement Cookson, gave the dry fly a trial with a very satisfactory result, as he caught from thirty to fifty daily for six days in succession,—indeed, I am not sure that he did not catch many more. In Lough Beltra good baskets of sea trout, with a grilse or two, are often made, while there are also large brown trout.

A few miles to the west of Newport are Loughs Feeagh and Furnace, drained by the short river of Burrishoole. Permission must be got from Mr. H. M. A. Jones, of Burrishoole Lodge, for the river and Lough Furnace; while to the Marquis of Sligo, or his agent, applications for leave on Lough Feeagh must be addressed. If leave be given, then baskets of from half a dozen to three dozen sea trout may be made here in moist weather during July and August.

Continuing our way along the north coast of Clew Bay, by car or by rail, about ten miles from Newport, following on the edge of the Curraun peninsula, we come to the Mulranny Hotel, owned by the Midland and Great Western Railway—an oasis in the desert, round which there are many lakes, together with the little Owengarve River on the road to Newport. A drive of fifteen miles due north of Mulranny will bring us to Croy Lodge, and the Owenduff (seventeen miles long), with its tributary with the long name of Tarsaghaunmore, the angling of which is usually let by the owner of Croy Lodge, to whom application should be made.

To the north of the Owenduff the Owenmore falls into the extreme head of the narrow, lengthy Bay of Tullaghan.

It is a river of considerable importance, draining one hundred and thirty square miles in the thirty miles of its course, but in this is included the area of Lake Carrowmore (five miles long by one wide) and several lesser ones. The tributaries are numerous, the Oweniny being the chief one. The Owenmore proper rises in Lake Dallybaun, almost in the centre of Mayo, and flowing to the west, through the Barony of Erris, it winds round the northern slopes of the Nephin Hills. Being a mountain river, it soon runs low in dry weather, while at all times it has to be well watched, or the inhabitants of the pools would soon be transferred to the cottages of the residents on the banks.

The best of the angling, which is above Bangor, belongs jointly, for about three miles on both sides, together with half of Lake Carrowmore, to Mr. G. T. Shaen-Carter, of Shaen Manor, Belmullet, and to Mr. J. Ross Fforde, and anglers wishing to secure a rod on this river should apply to the first-named gentleman or to his agent.

The fishing is always let, usually in conjunction with shooting, to three or four rods, who live at a lodge on the river some little distance above Bangor. Should anyone have leave to fish the river before the occupants of the lodge have arrived, they must avail themselves of the accommodation offered by the Grouse Inn at Bangor, which might easily be bettered.

The angling of Lough Carrowmore is worthless, and Mr. Petrie, who has the netting of it, together with that of the estuary, stated before the Fishery Commission of 1900 that though large quantities of *salmonidæ* made their way into the lake, he had never known one to be taken by any lure whatsoever, although he had often tried this

lake himself and seen many others do the same. He accounts for this extraordinary state of affairs as being due to the very muddy bottom of the lake, which, being somewhat shallow, is quickly stirred up by the least breeze.

I have seen the same state of affairs on Loch More, of the Thurso, in Caithness, although there it takes a very high wind to cause a similar effect.

Salmon and grilse average about 10 and 6 lb.; white trout from ¾ to 2 lb. Fish begin to run in July, when, if the angler hits off a day on the top of a flood, for which wading stockings are necessary, sport is nearly a certainty.

Mr. John Jameson, of Dublin, one of the rod-holders, has had as many as eight fish in the day, of from 6 to 14 lb., but never more.

The rods commence on the 1st of February, with the nets following on the 15th, on which date there are plenty of small, clean fish in Carrowmore; the nets come off at the end of August, when the rods are left in undisputed possession until the end of September.

Most of the standard Irish and Scotch patterns will kill if used of a small size, but anyone going to fish the Owenmore had better, before leaving Dublin, pay a visit to Kelly, Lower Sackville Street, who ties for Mr. Jameson, and knows all that is wanted,—indeed, not only for this particular river, but for pretty well all over Ireland.

About five miles below Bangor the Owenmore joins with the Munhin River, draining Lough Carrowmore after a course of about four miles.

From forty to twenty years ago, before Messrs. Petrie had the netting, enormous hauls were made with the nets, and though of late years these have become very much smaller, Mr. Petrie stated that the business still

provided " thin porridge " for himself and his partners, so anglers will join with me in wishing him thicker " barley crowdie,"—for the better his catch the better the sport for the rod.

From 1890 to 1894 Messrs. Petrie's average was 4966 salmon and grilse each year, with 1674 sea trout. From 1895 to 1899 the average fell to 3369 and 1556 trout, a difference of nearly 8000 fish in the quinquennial period, while the trout figures have hardly altered.

Taking leave of the Owenmore, we will proceed to Belmullet, to pass the night there and make our way the next day to Ballycastle, a desolate drive of some thirty miles. About half-way the Glenamoy River (fourteen miles long) is crossed, while to the north of it is the Muingnabo, each of these rivers holding *salmonidæ*, and when in flood giving good sport, while both of them fall into the head of the long, narrow Bay of Sruwaddacon, the angling of these out-of-the-way streams being usually let to the shooting tenants of this wild district.

Between Belmullet, Ballycastle, and Killala, at each of which places there are inns, many small streams fall into the Atlantic, of which the above-mentioned two and the Cloonaghmore at Killala are the chief ones.

A drive of ten miles from Killala will bring the angler to Ballina, to make the acquaintance of the far-famed Moy River, the largest and most important in Mayo. Rising in the Sligo Hills a little to the east of Lough Easkey, it pursues a S.S.W. course for a considerable distance until reaching Ballylahon Bridge, where it makes a sharp turn nearly due north, and, passing Foxford, it falls at Ballina into the head of Killala Bay.

Inclusive of the lakes of Cullen and Conn, it drains

eight hundred and six square miles of country, receiving in its course of fifty miles many big tributaries, of which the Owengarve (sixteen miles), the Trimoge (thirteen miles), and the Yellow (twelve miles) are the principal ones, though the angling in none of them is of much account, being confined almost entirely to the locals. The Deel (twenty-eight miles) is a big tributary falling into the northern end of Loch Conn, while the Clydagh, of eighteen miles, empties into the south end of Lake Cullen, the combined waters of these two large lakes entering the Moy some five miles below Ballylahon Bridge. From this junction to Foxford, where there is a fair inn, is a further five miles, while another twelve intervenes between Foxford and Ballina, the Moy hereabouts being from fifty to seventy yards wide, and flowing through a flat, ugly country.

Opening for rods on the 1st of February, and for nets on the 15th of March, it closes for the latter on the 13th of August and for the former on the 15th of September, although sea trout may be angled for up to the end of the month; but this is chiefly carried on below the weirs in the little river of Bunree falling into the estuary at Ballina on the north shore, which is very good in times of flood.

Clean fish are usually taken on the opening day both in the river and at Pontoon, on Lake Cullen. In 1901, which was a very bad season, only fifty spring fish were taken by the rods up to the middle of May. Grilse begin to run in June, and of these from the first of that month to the end of the season the total capture was only 200, in which are included about 30 salmon. In the same period the white trout fishers were getting from 5 to 20 a day from ¾ to 3½ lb. This take, as compared

with those of the good old days, is indeed a poor one,[1] for Jim Hearns tells us that in 1843 Sir Richard Sutton had 100 in a month, Mr. Coke 40 in a week, Mr. Musgrave 165 in six weeks, Captain Congreve 22 in a day; while in 1866 Mr. G. Pollock had 27 in three days, Mr. Fforde 15 in one day, Dr. Peard 15 in a day and 97 in twenty-one days. From a perusal of Dr. Peard's book, *A Year of Liberty*, the reader would infer that this take of his was made in July 1865, for it was on the 30th of January in that year that he tells his readers he made his start on his angling tour. Miss Little, who gave Dr. Peard the angling and who owns the several fishery in the tidal part of the Moy and also some of the river, when giving her evidence to the Fishery Commissioners, expressly states that this catch of Dr. Peard's was made in 1852, just thirteen years earlier than the reader is led to suppose!

In the tidal water below the weirs angling cannot be pursued until about an hour after the ebb; it is carried on from cots, and formerly in this part of the river it used to be no uncommon sight to see five or six boats, each about thirty yards behind the other, with their occupants all fast in fish. In those days this piece of water was not netted, but now all the rocks and stones which formerly gave the fish good shelter have been removed from the bed of the river so that the nets may have a clear sweep.

This water, which is tidal below the weirs, is owned by

[1] As our MS. goes to the hands of the printer we hear with pleasure that during the first week in July 1902 the Moy has shown signs of a return to the glories of days gone by, for in addition to many other takes of grilse we hear that Mr. Philipson Stowe, 14th Hussars, while fishing with Jim Hearns, had a day of twelve grilse—a record bag on the Moy for one day for many years past.—*Note to First Edition.*

THE SALMON WEIR AT BALLINA

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the Moy Fishery Company (their average take per season from 1882 to 1893 was 32,554 fish), who freely give permission to anglers on the condition that all fish caught are to be sent that day to their Fishery Office. Personally, we should prefer to pay a fixed sum per day, with the right of keeping the first fish caught, and in saying that much we shall most likely only be echoing the sentiments of many other anglers. But the remark is in no way intended to reflect disparagingly on the liberality of the Fishery Company, and, indeed, all over the Moy fishings the proprietors have ever been noted for their kindness to anglers, to whom they have given sport with no niggard hands, sport which the angler in Scotland would have been charged for and gladly paid for. As the Fishery Company's rental is put down at £2527 a year, it is quite clear they must net an enormous number of fish ere they can even boast, like Mr. Petrie, of having made sure of "thin porridge." The several fishery of Miss Little in the tidal waters also yields a very heavy take; while the non-tidal waters that are above the weirs, and situate between them and Lough Cullen and Ballylahon Bridge, are netted by fully two dozen nets, each of them hard at work on every lawful day; and, strange to say, the netting of this long stretch of fresh water has been specially legalised, just as if it had been a sea estuary.

In the opinion of many who are in a position to judge, this fresh-water netting is carried to an excess, which is doing much to harm the river. It becomes, then, a question as to what is excessive, for the captures by these fresh-water nets are so large that all will recognise that to abolish them *in toto* would admit a stock of fish to the river far larger than was desirable either for the require-

ments of sport or breeding purposes ; while, as these large extra numbers of fish made their way to the tributaries, poaching would increase a hundredfold, and result in the bulk of these fish being killed on the spawning-beds at a time when they are unfit for food, instead of being taken and sent to market when they are at their best. Of these river nets some belong to Miss Little, some to the Moy Fishery Company, and others are leased by Mr. J. C. Wilson and the Messrs. Petrie, the last-named firm owning the draft-nets at Coolcronan Weir, where in the past twenty years they have captured as follows :—

In 7 years,	from	1879 to 1885,	an average of	2676	fish	per season.
„	„	1886 to 1892,	„	3552	„	„
„	„	1893 to 1899,	„	1583	„	„

If to this be added the take of the other river nets, we think it will be recognised that it would be an absolute waste to let all these fish into the river. Nevertheless, after reading the evidence of Mr. Utred A. Knox and others, we feel convinced that the netting *is* excessive, and that it would be for the benefit of all concerned if those who hold the netting rights would come to some arrangement amongst themselves by which the captures of each might be somewhat curtailed. With regard to fresh-water nets, Mr. U. A. Knox delivered himself as follows :—

" I think there is an undue amount of netting in the river. There are too many nets working in the Moy, and working in an improper and injudicious manner. They are working one after another—overlapping, I think it is called—and from the time the net starts in the morning until it ceases to work there is no interval to allow the fish to pass by. It is exactly like me doing this " (clapping his hands). " There is no interval for you to put anything

into my hand or to take it out. The only time for the poor fish to go up is in the evening ; but when they do go up they are met next day by the same kind of thing, so that not many fish go to the spawning beds.

" With regard to poaching, I think the Constabulary should be called upon to assist, not with a view to preserve the salmon—I leave the onus of that entirely on the conservators—but with a view of protecting the peace, because I think that where a mob are collected to prevent people doing what they have a legal right to do, that is the initiatory step to a breach of the peace, and the police should step in. The main thing we require for the protection of the fish during the breeding season is by more stringent measures to punish the offenders by imprisonment and not by fine."

There is no doubt that the Moy district poachers are answerable for a good part of the decreased yield. They are numerous, and ready at all times to resort to violence against single bailiffs ; in fact, they are so bad that lately the bailiffs have been sent out in couples, while the serious nature of this poaching has been admitted by every proprietor on the Moy.

The fishery immediately above the salmon weirs at Ballina is leased by Mr. J. C. Wilson, who charges 7s. 6d. a day, and when there are fish and the water is right this is a capital piece of angling, while the fisher is entitled to keep all he gets. Mrs. Saunders Knox Gore, Mr. Perry Knox Gore, and Mr. Utred A. Knox, of Mount Falcon, reserve several miles of water between Coolcronan House and Ballina exclusively for the rod.

The Mount Falcon water, which extends over about one and a half miles of both banks, is sometimes let. No

wading is necessary, as the water is too deep, while such casts as cannot be fished from the banks are worked by boat. The rent for the season is £100; if not taken as a whole, it is let by the month, the rent for June and July, the two best ones, being £30 for each, while the cost of the earlier and later periods is much less.

For all other particulars anent the anglings of the Moy and its lakes, and for all the flies that have been proved to be killers, there is no one to equal Jem Hearns, of Upper Mill Street, Ballina. His Grouse and Orange, Goshawk, Lightning, and King Edward are, indeed, pretty combinations of colour and feathers, this last production being so named because with it the loyal Jem killed his first fish in the first year of our king's reign. All the same, many of the standard Scotch patterns will often do execution. The Moy flies are on the small size, and two are usually put up on the same cast. Jointed productions like the Popham were at one time the great medicines for the Moy salmon, the smaller ones having buts of black ostrich herl between each different colour, while in the larger ones a pinch of some bright-coloured mohair is fastened at the top of each joint to lie snugly under the wing in a line with it. They have, however, gone somewhat out of fashion, and here are the dressings of those that are now thought the best by Jem Hearns :—

Flies for the Moy

Yellow Goshawk

Tag. Three turns silver twist and claret floss silk.
Tail. Topping and kingfisher or chatterer.
But. Black ostrich herl.

KING STREET, BALLINA

THE BALLYSADARE ABOVE THE LADDER

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Body. Orange yellow floss silk, silver tinsel, undyed red cock's hackle, blue jay at shoulder.

Wing. Four or five toppings, wood-duck cheeks.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

The Black Goshawk

Tag. Three turns of silver twist and orange floss.

Tail. Topping.

But. Black ostrich.

Body. Black floss, silver tinsel, dark claret hackle, gallina at shoulder.

Wing. Four or five toppings, blue chatterer or kingfisher cheeks.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

The Orange and Grouse

Tag. Silver twist and claret floss.

Tail. Topping and kingfisher.

But. Black ostrich herl.

Body. Orange yellow floss, silver twist, grouse hackle from half-way up, blue jay at shoulder.

Wing. Bustard, gold pheasant tail and ruff, blue macaw feelers, topping all over, chatterer or kingfisher cheeks.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

The Black avd Claret

Tag. Three turns of silver twist and orange floss.

Tail. Topping and kingfisher.

But. Black ostrich herl.

Body. Black floss, silver tinsel, dark claret hackle, blue jay at shoulder.

Wing. Under part of gold pheasant, yellow saddle feather, tail and ruff, mallard wing, long wood-duck cheeks, strands of blue and yellow swan, topping over all.

The Violet and Red

Tag. Silver twist and orange floss.

Tail. Topping.

But. Black ostrich herl.

Body. Violet floss, silver twist, red cock's hackle undyed, blue jay at shoulder.

Wing. Gold pheasant ruff and mallard, topping over all.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

With the above flies, plus some "Jocks," Blue, Black, and Silver Doctors, Thunder and Lightning, Dunkeld, Childers and Durham Rangers, dressed on Limerick hooks, sizes from 8½ to 7, the angler can confidently attack any of the northern Irish rivers.

Ballina has three good hotels—the Moy, the Imperial, and the Royal, so that anglers are sure of a choice of comfortable quarters. The salmon angling in Lough Conn, which is some twelve miles in length by about two in breadth, is almost confined to a narrow area in the neighbourhood of Gortner Abbey Hotel, at the head of the lake, where the property was owned by the late Sir Roger Palmer, who at one time contemplated letting his fishery right for netting purposes. On hearing of this, Miss Little, rightly enough thinking that such proposed netting of the lake would do much damage to the stock of breeding fish, already none too large, at once came forward and took a lease from Sir Roger solely to prevent anyone else acquiring a right which she herself has never exercised, and for this mercy, and for much careful and spirited

protection, the Moy is deeply indebted to the Little family.

The smaller Lough of Cullen is best fished from Pontoon. The few salmon casts are close at hand, and seldom fail to yield sport when the waters are right, yet in these days of dwindling takes both Lough Conn and Lough Cullen are more famous for their big trout and giant pike than for their salmon angling.

In addition to the hotels at Pontoon and Gortner Abbey, there are other comfortable quarters to be found on the shores of these lakes, particulars of which can be had from Jem Hearns. Seventy-five years ago there was no such thing as a pike in either of the lakes or in the Moy. They got into Lough Cullen in much the same manner as their relatives in Scotland found their way into Loch Awe. History states that a gentleman at Castlebar had a pond in which there were pike, and that, wishing to clean it, he let off the water into a brook connected with the Turlough River, a tributary of the Clydagh falling into Lough Cullen. Of course, the fish went with the water, and *hinc illæ lachrymæ*, for the pike have increased to such an extent that the damage they now do to the salmon fry is certainly one of the causes that contribute directly to the decreasing yield of Moy. At Foxford there is a record of a pike of 42 lb. being killed which contained two cantuls of fry and a 5-lb. salmon !—a pretty good stomachful, even allowing something for a trifle of Irish exaggeration.

In addition to the pike, Mr. U. A. Knox states that during his thirty years' experience of these parts the merganSers and cormorants have far more than doubled their numbers owing to the protection afforded them by the Wild Birds Act. He would like to see a crusade carried

on against the pike, and protection removed from these birds, for, as he pertinently inquires, "What good is a merganser or a cormorant to man or beast?"

With regard to the decrease in the Moy, the evidence of Mr. Petrie shows very plainly how great it is, for the captures made by his nets (already given) for the past seven years are 58 per cent. less than those of the previous seven years, which we understand to mean that where formerly he had caught 100 fish he now only got 42: a fearful falling-off, considering that it extends over seven years, with every appearance of continuing.

Therefore let the riparian proprietors join with the netting lessees of the Moy to put their heads together in friendly council, and, while mutually resolving to forego the extraction of the uttermost farthing out of their rights, let them combine together to restore to the famous river the splendid takes formerly made by nets and rods. Let them devise some way of partly abating the catching power of the nets working in the fresh water of the river. Above all, let them protect the spawning beds more efficiently. Let the pike be killed down, and let the proper authorities be petitioned for permission to kill the mergansers and cormorants; and, these things being done, then there would be no doubt that the splendid Moy would soon regain its former prestige as a salmon river ranking second to none. With regard to the destruction of pike, those who are interested in the matter should read how they are dealt with in Loch Awe, full details being given in the Blue Books which contain the Reports of the Scotch Fishery Commissioners.

As to the mergansers and cormorants, although they are birds that only frequent districts that are sparsely

populated, Ireland has no monopoly of their company. In Scotland large numbers of these birds meet with "accidents"; also they nest near the scene of their ravages, and, good gracious! what clumsy feet some water-bailiffs have, and how blind at times the sharpest-eyed keepers become! However, Merganser and Co. can hardly expect their nests in these out-of-the-way places to be more exempt from accidents than are the eggs of the peewit on the cultivated and populous lands of the south, or the nests of the thrushes and blackbirds of the suburban gardens of London.

Bang! bang! rang out two reports, as a Caithness keeper and I, bent on a heather-burning expedition, topped a steep brae overlooking a salmon pool in the river below.

"Awm thinking ye'll fush no more," said Donald, while looking down at two dead mergansers floating to the sea.

Said I with a wink, "And what about the Wild Birds Protection Act?"

"Well, sir," came the reply, "it just don't run in these pairts, for we a' think that the puir gentlemen that made it could not have known what sort of a beastie they were preserving. Anyway, sir, Act or no Act, my master expects me to preserve the fish, and as long as there's no one to tell on me I do my best. Of course, sir, *I don't count you!*"

Thus was I made *particeps criminis* in breaking the law of the land—a fearful sensation, which only a rabid angler could face with equanimity.

Should these lines ever meet your sight, then "Eyes front and attention," Mr. Utred A. Knox.

THE COUNTY OF SLIGO

Easkey and Lough Easkey.
Ballysadare River.
The Unshin and Lough Arrow.
Sligo or Garavogue River.
Lough Gill.
Drumcliffe River.
Glencar Lough.
The Drowse and Bundoran.
Lough Melvin.
Garrison and Kilcoo River

CHAPTER III

The County of Sligo

Quitting Ballina, and holding our way round the coast, the first river we come to of any importance is the Easkey. Before reaching it, however, fully half a dozen smaller streams will have been crossed, all of which hold *salmonidæ*, and give pretty sport, chiefly with sea trout, when in flood.

The Easkey rises from the lake of the same name, in the Slieve Gamp or Ox Mountains, draining in its course of nineteen miles forty-one square miles of country. There is an inn at Easkey, and another at Dromore, which is nearer for fishing the upper part of the river, though before that can be done permission must be got from the owner, Mr. T. L. Brinkley, of Fortland, Easkey.

Though the nets do not begin work till the 1st of June, and cease on the 31st of August, the rods may commence on 1st of February and continue up to the 31st of October. July and August are the best months, and when the river is right sport is often good, although nothing like what it used to be before the sea-coast was harried by the devastating drift nets.

It is about a twenty-five miles drive from Dromore to Ballysadare, in which distance many small streams are passed that fall into Sligo Bay, all of them good in wet weather, all of them more or less inaccessible.

The Ballysadare River runs into the head of the bay of the same name, which is an offshoot from Sligo Bay. Though the river itself is but a few miles in length, its tributaries are of considerable size, the Owenmore having a course of thirty-two miles, the Owenbeg fifteen miles, and the Unshin or Arrow, which drains Lough Arrow, flows for fourteen miles. These three streams unite at Collooney to form the far-famed Ballysadare River, their united waters after a run of a mile or two dashing over what was once regarded as an impassable fall.

The river, with its tributaries, is the property of the Right Hon. E. H. Cooper, P.C., whose uncle conceived the idea of laddering these falls, an undertaking which he completed at considerable expense in 1840, and after having secured the fishery rights by Act of Parliament. This was the first fish pass ever made in Ireland, and it is remarkable that an initial attempt should have been so very successful.

Prior to the making of these passes—for there are two, one being just under the falls, with another at Collooney—no salmon had ever been seen above them. Nevertheless, in the sixties, in less than twenty years the average yield to Mr. Cooper's three draft nets, fished in the estuary, was 8000 fish per season! Mr. Cooper has likewise had two hatcheries at work for the last twenty years. At first these appeared to increase the number and the weight of the fish, though lately the result has not been so satisfactory, but the probable explanation of this is that the output of the hatcheries is not sufficiently large to keep pace with the destructiveness of the thirty-five nets that work on the adjacent coasts, within a distance of fifty miles of the mouth of the Ballysadare. Most of these

THE BALLYSADARE LADDER AND HATCHERY

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nets are worked as fixed engines, while those that are not fixed are fished as drift nets.

Since the Report of 1901 was issued by the Irish Commissioners, these last-named nets have been declared illegal in Scotland, so presumably they are equally so in Ireland; and if not, then certainly they ought to be. The nets begin on the 4th of March and cease on the 13th of September, two oddly fixed dates, for surely the 1st of March to the 15th of September would have been better. The rod season is from the 1st of February to the 30th of September.

For the past five years the take has fallen to an average of 5000 fish, which also have diminished in size, and annexed are returns for the last ten years, showing a great decrease since 1897.

1890 . . .	8294	1895 . . .	5376
1891 . . .	9554	1896 . . .	7741
1892 . . .	9928	1897 . . .	4884
1893 . . .	3839	1898 . . .	2942
1894 . . .	8431	1899 . . .	3064

Strange to relate that, following the bad example of the salmon, eels and flounders have also entirely vanished, although formerly they were so plentiful that anyone could catch a dinner for himself and his family in half an hour.

Soon after the fish passes were made the angling became very good, and then by degrees the fish became indisposed to rise, though there were plenty of them. It is possible that this undesirable state of affairs may have been brought about by crossing the native fish with those from the Weser, in Germany.

The average rod catch from 1907 to 1912 is 150 fish

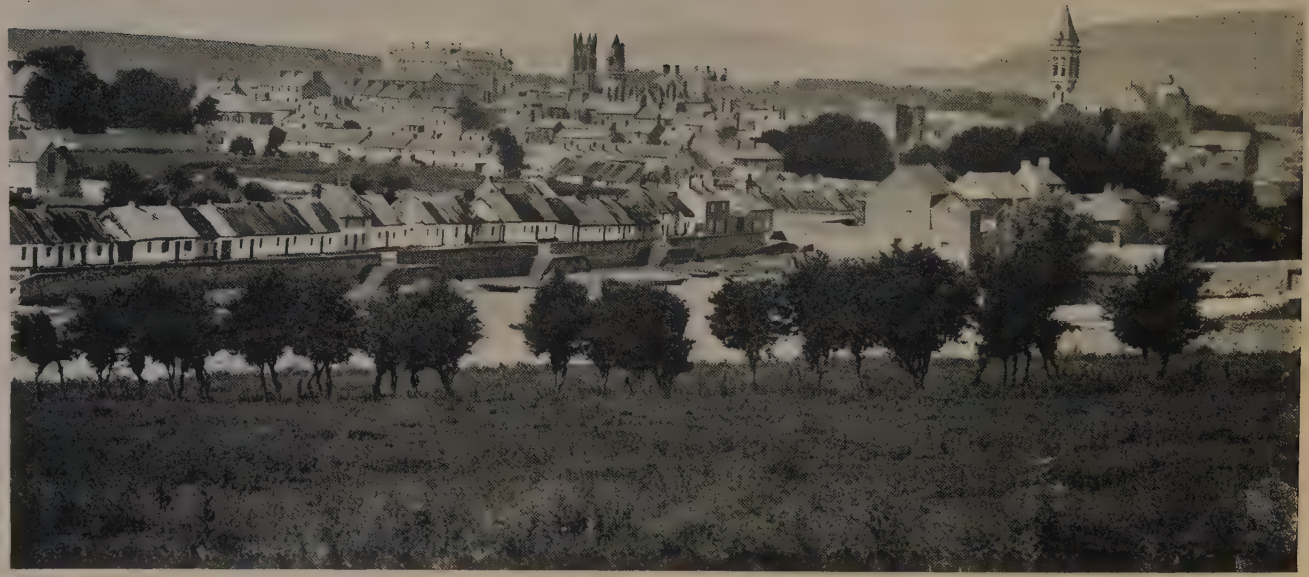
per season. There are no sea trout to speak of. Captain Cooper, the owner, reports that "since the great increase of the drift nets on the coasts that his net catches are down fully one half, and unless something is done to reduce the number of drift nets it is likely to diminish still further."

It is but a short journey by train from Ballysadare to Sligo, where there are good hotels, while the Garavogue or Sligo River runs through the town, and empties Lough Gill, which is a few miles away to the east.

The Garavogue is, with the one exception of the Waterville in the Killarney district, the earliest river in Ireland, for nets and rods commence work on the 1st of January, and that they are fairly entitled to do so is shown by the fact that up to about 1898 the nets often captured upwards of 1000 fish in the first month; in 1896 they had 1310, and in 1891, 1109. Indeed, so early is the run in this river that in November 1891 the Fishery Board made an experimental haul, when they secured 41 quite fresh-run fish. The river belongs to Colonel Wood Martin, of Cleveragh, Sligo, who is also the author of a closely-studied and most interesting four-volume *History of Sligo* from 1688 to the present time.

Since 1898 there has been a sudden and great decrease in the returns from the netting, which is over by the middle of May, although both nets and rods may be legally worked up to the 15th of July,—while also since that year hardly a fish has fallen to the rod, a truly lamentable state of affairs, having regard to the size of the river and the capabilities of Lough Gill, the two having a catchment area of one hundred and forty square miles.

The incessant and severe poaching of the Dromahair tributary falling into Lough Gill, up which almost the whole



SLIGO

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of the Garavogue fish must make their way to spawn, is one of the chief causes of the decrease, and on this head Mr. Manley Palmer, when examined by the Fishery Commissioners of 1900, gave the following evidence.

Said he, in speaking of the Garavogue and Lough Gill: "I have been fishing these waters with the rod for the last fifty years; they have gone from bad to worse; in fact, as far as rod fishing is concerned, they have gone to nothing. For six years I have not killed a fish in the lake or the river, while my keeper, who fishes much more often than I do, averages but two a year! Formerly we could see twenty or thirty fish rising before rain; now you may be on the same ground before rain comes, and you will not see one; there are none."

Mr. Palmer goes on to say that when the river used to open on the 1st of February the angling was very good, but since it had been put forward to the 1st of January the decrease was very apparent. Further, he holds that the ladder in Sligo weir is quite in the wrong place, and that many fish, after vainly trying to ascend it, drop back to the tideway.

As to protection, Mr. Palmer speaks plainly: "The ordinary bailiff that you give 50s. or £3 to for the spawning season is not worth sixpence! Firstly, he does not want to arrest, and, in the next place, he is afraid to. He is so bullied if he does, that practically there is no such thing as prosecution by the ordinary small bailiffs. One policeman would be worth ten bailiffs. They say squarely they are not going to have their heads broken for 50s. Also the ladder in Sligo has been constantly found stopped up, which we believe is done designedly. Then, again, where there is occasionally a conviction for poaching, the

fine is reduced to nothing. I would suggest that the police should prosecute, and get all the fines."

Mr. R. W. Fenton, the Crown solicitor, also spoke very strongly on the question of the illegal fishing on this coast, describing miles of drift and fixed nets illegally worked under the eyes of the coastguard. Then, again, the estuary of the Garavogue is ceaselessly netted by small-mesh nets under the pretence of catching small sea fish and flounders, and these nets take myriads of salmon and white trout fry, and are worked without any regard to close seasons.

Here, then, in the absolute destruction of the angling and nearly total destruction of the netting, we have a sad specimen of the fate that is slowly but surely overtaking many other Irish rivers.

Turning our backs on the ruined angling of Sligo, we will make the best of our way to Bundoran, the Drowse, and Lough Melvin.

A few miles out of Sligo we pass the Drumcliffe River, flowing from Glencar Lake, jointly owned, I think, by Mr. Owen Wynne and Sir Henry Gore Booth, a pretty stream and a beautiful lake, both showing a decided improvement of recent years, entirely owing to good management and better preservation, for up till ten years ago hardly a fish was killed to the rod in Glencar, while now the take averages at least thirty a season. Although so near to the Sligo river, the Drumcliffe with its Lough have totally different close times; rods begin on the 1st of February, with the nets following on the 4th, these latter coming off on the 19th of August, while the former continue to the 19th of October.

A further drive of fifteen miles brings us again into touch with the railway and the comforts of a Bundoran

LOUGH GILL

LOUGH GLENCAR

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hotel, of which there are two. Here the River Drowse, which drains Lough Melvin, falls into Donegal Bay after a run of some five miles. It is an early river, opening on the 1st of February for rods, while the nets do not follow until a month later, the whole fishing being ended by the 1st of June, except for an occasional grilse, although the rod may be used until the end of September.

Fresh-run fish are often seen entering the river in January, and Rogan reports from Ballyshannon, which is but a few miles away, the capture in the Drowse and Lough Melvin is about 120 fish, averaging 10 lb., between the opening day and the middle of May.

The Marine Hotel at Bundoran is quite comfortable, and about a mile from the river, for which no waders are wanted. Tickets may be had on the following terms from R. Deacon, at the Fishery Office, Bundrowse Bridge :—

1. Artificial fly only to be used.
2. No fishing with worm, shrimp, or bait of any sort.
3. No spinning with any lure, real or artificial.
4. During the time no one is in residence at Lareen six rods per day will be let, but when anyone is in residence at Lareen only four rods per day will be let.
5. When the water is open to six rods, the angling will be from the lower end of the Black Water Pool to the sea.
6. When only four rods are let it will be from Monolek Bridge to the sea.
7. Each day ticket, 12s. 6d. ; weekly ones, £3, available for six days.
8. No angling after sunset.
9. The angler arriving first on the river will choose his station to commence fishing, and the next comer in order may take up any position left, which is four hundred paces away from any other angler up or down stream.
10. Anglers may keep one fish a day, providing they catch a fish a day, but all over and above one fish must be sent to the Fishery Office.

We believe that these tickets can also be got from Rogan's, at Ballyshannon. At any rate, all the flies for this district, including the Erne, and every information as to any fishings within hail of Ballyshannon, can be obtained from them.

It is pleasant to be able to say that the angling of the Drowse and Lough Melvin are showing an improvement, for overnetting and hard poaching had brought them to a very low ebb.

For fishing in Lough Melvin, which is nine miles long, the best place to stay is at the comfortable little hotel at Garrison, at the head of the lake, for the boats are good, while the men are pleasant spoken and very keen to show sport. All the best salmon casts are near the hotel end of the lake, the fish being rather more partial to a spinning lure than to the fly.

The Kilcoo River, falling into the head of Lough Melvin, a little to the south of the hotel, is sometimes good for a few grilse in an August flood or later. The lake also holds a plentiful supply of the gillaroo, which, however, seldom go above 4 lb.

It is a curious thing that salmon should run the Drowse in January and February, while they avoid the Erne, close by, until May. The local fishermen hold the theory that the smolts from the tributaries of Lough Melvin do not come down the Drowse until July or August, and that, as they cannot therefore return the same year, they appear as fresh-run fish in February. They say that when the smolts come down the shores of Lough Melvin, in May and June, they get lost in a sort of *cul-de-sac* at the end of it, and take a couple of months to hit on the opening of the river, which does not flow out of the exact end, but out of

one side of it, in the same way that the Orchy, in Argyllshire, flows from Loch Tulla.[1]

It would almost seem as if this theory might be the correct solution of the run of early fish to Lough Melvin, although it may well be argued that if this is correct, that then every late river might be converted into an early one by keeping back the fry. It would be a difficult and illegal thing to do as the law stands at present, for the barrier that kept the fry from descending would keep fish from ascending; but if it could be tried on a small scale, and the experiment resulted in sending fish in February, March, and April into a river to which no fish previously came until May, then, indeed, the result would have far-reaching consequences, for if late rivers could be made into early ones, it would greatly increase their value both for netting and angling.

A remarkable incident happened in connection with the Drowse on the 9th of April 1901, when a fish was captured by the rod, marked "D 95," which Mr. R. L. Moore absolutely identified as a cock fish that he had spawned at Kilrea, for the hatchery there, some eighteen miles up the Bann, and returned in good condition to that river on the preceding 1st of January. It then weighed 7 lb., and, strange to say, when caught three months later it was exactly the same weight, but in wretched condition. Whether this was to be accounted for by its long journey from Bann to Drowse, fully one hundred and sixty miles, or whether it had unconsciously been hurt when spawned, must remain a matter of conjecture.

[1] It is possible that something of the same character may also take place in Loch Tulla, for the Orchy fish, which have to reach their own river *via* the Awe, come up in March and April, whereas no Awe fish proper rest in the Awe until June.

THE COUNTY OF DONEGAL

The Erne—

Ballyshannon.
Belleek.
Lough Erne.
Enniskillen.

The Eask and Lough Eask.

The Eany or Inver.

The Glen, or the Carrick, or Teelin River.

The Owentocker, Owenea—Ardara Hotel, Glenties Hotel.

The Gweebarra River.

Loughs Dungloe and Tully. The Rosses Fishery.

The Gweedore or Crolly River and Lough Anure.

The Claudy River. Lochs Nacung and Dunlewey —Gweedore Hotel.

The Owencarrow or Lackagh River.

The Lennan and Lough Fern.

The Deele.

The Swilly.

The Finn.

The Mourne.

The Strule.

The Derg.

CHAPTER IV

The Erne

Lands us in the county of Donegal. This "clear-watered, many-famed, ever-roaring, parti-coloured, bellowing, in salmon abounding, beautiful old torrent," as it is described by the Duke of Leinster, when writing in the days of King Dermot Macmorough, who was a contemporary of our Edward the Second, flows from the large lake of Gowla in County Longford, and after a course of some seventy miles, during which it drains one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight square miles of every sort of country, falls into Donegal Bay and the Atlantic at the well-known town of Ballyshannon.

Its tributaries are numberless, some of them flowing from lakes of all sizes, and altogether their total length is little short of four hundred miles.

On leaving Lough Gowla the river flows for about ten miles through County Cavan, and passing through Lough Oughter, which receives on its north-east shore the large tributary of the Annalee, forty-two miles in length, the Erne, after a farther run of another ten miles or so, shortly after passing Belturbet, enters Fermanagh County, and expands into Upper Lough Erne, which here on the west shore receives the Woodford River of eighteen miles, carrying the overflow from Lough Garradice and several smaller

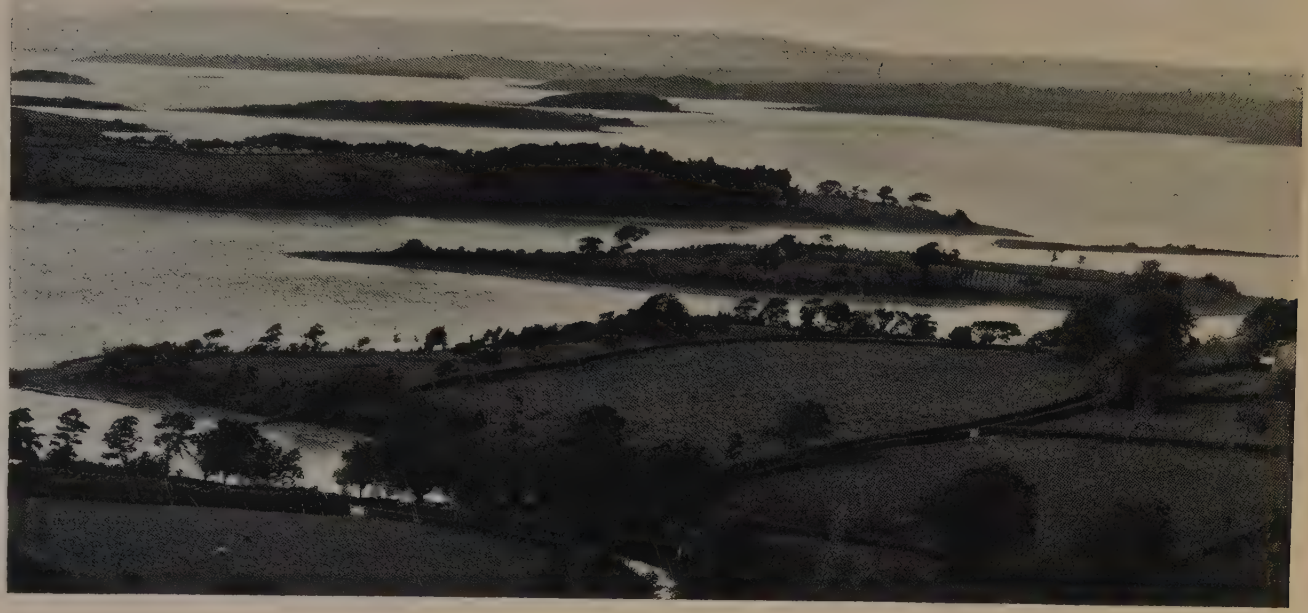
ones, while on the east shore the waters of the Finn tributary (thirty-one miles) fall in.

This upper lake, which covers nine thousand two hundred and seventy-eight acres, is thirteen miles in length, thickly studded with islands and indented with countless bays.

Near the north end, on the east side, the tributaries Colebrook (thirty-five miles) and the Tempo (sixteen miles) unite at Maguire's Bridge, and a little farther below add their waters to the lake; while on the opposite bank the Arney (twenty-three miles) falls in a few miles to the west of where the Erne leaves the upper lake, which is practically a network of lagoons with low, swampy shores, into which flows the drainage of a vast extent of country.

In the rains of autumn and winter, so large was the mass of waters thus gathered together that some twenty thousand acres used to be submerged for months at a stretch, and it was with the object of doing away with this flooding that the drainage works, so much abused by anglers, were constructed, at a great outlay and by dint of much skilful engineering.

Naturally, the necessary dredging operations while the work was in progress made the Erne so dirty as almost entirely to spoil the angling for the time being, while even now, when all is finished and in working order, there is but little doubt that the fish have suffered by the operations; for it is a question whether the passes at Belleek give a sufficiently easy and continuous means of ascending them; then, when the sluice-gates are opened, the water suddenly alternates from being very high to becoming very low, a fluctuation which gives the poacher only too good an opportunity, if the fish are on the spawning beds; or perhaps the bed is left quite dry, and so entirely spoilt,



LOWER LOUGH ERNE

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for, as all anglers are aware, fish do not spawn in lakes, but invariably push up some tributary.

The drainage works also did away with Eel Weir Hill, formerly one of the best salmon casts in the kingdom, always full of fish, and upwards of a mile in length.

On leaving the upper lake the Erne flows onwards past Enniskillen, where it enters Lower Lough Erne. Here there are sluice-gates in connection with the drainage works, and on their proper regulation by the men in charge depends a great deal of the Erne sport, for if these gates are shut down tight until the water is at a certain height at Enniskillen and then opened wide, a big flood is caused in the river for a few hours; then the gates are closed, when the river is at once lowered, and if this sort of thing takes place often, it is clear salmon cannot settle down properly in the pools. To the west of Enniskillen the Sillees tributary, of thirty-three miles, empties into the lake, which covers twenty-eight thousand acres and is twenty-four miles in length, but much deeper and altogether grander than the upper one, though also thickly dotted with islands. Into its northern shores flow the tributaries of Ballanamallard (sixteen miles), the Kesh (eleven miles), and the Termon (thirteen miles), the latter falling in at Pettigo; and, with the exception of the Dromore, the Sillees, and the Finn Rivers, all the other numerous tributaries afford fine spawning ground. Ten miles or so to the west of Pettigo lies Belleek, while four miles farther on is Ballyshannon, and between these two places all the angling is carried on, and at one of them the angler must stay, the hotels at either place being equally comfortable.

Fishers on Lough Erne do not go there entirely for salmon; they catch them if they can. But the lake is

more famed for its May-fly season and its heavy trout, which go up to 20 lb.,—indeed, one of 30 lb. is told of; while there is such a mixture of other fish that when the spinning baits are at work no one can be sure of what he may get hold of, for the lake holds salmon, bull trout, sea trout, great lake trout, common trout, pike, and perch; while of coarse and small fish there are pollen, bream, rudd (misnamed roach by the natives), common stickleback, and lampern (called " nine-eyes " by the locals).

Between Belleek and the Assaroe Falls at Ballyshannon (so named after Red Hugh Roe, an ancient Irish king, who was drowned in trying to cross them) the Erne falls one hundred and fifty feet, so that the streams are rapid, broken-water rushes, with the pools between them long and deep, while flowing with just that pleasant pace which makes casting such a joy.

Having thus briefly described the leading features of the far-famed Erne, we will now deal with its sport. In about 1866 the netting and the angling were purchased for £45,000 by the late Mr. R. L. Moore of Molenan, Lough Derg (perhaps the best friend Irish salmon and Irish anglers ever had), the nets being worked below the Assaroe Falls, in the three miles between them and the sea, while the four miles from the falls to Belleek were kept entirely for the rod.

Here are the present rules, and for further information anglers should apply to Thomas Bruen, Head Bailiff, Cliff, Belleek.

Regulations for Angling for Salmon in the River Erne.

1. Gentlemen may angle from the bridge at Ballyshannon upwards.

2. Each gentleman to pay £4 per week for his permission to angle; he may retain two fish per week, and shall send (in good

THE ERNE AT BELLEEK

THE ERNE AT CLIFF, BELLEEK

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order) all other salmon caught by him to proprietors' office at Ballyshannon.

3. The permission authorises one salmon rod only to be fished at one time.

4. The permission is not transferable.

5. Boats are provided at certain parts of the river for the use of anglers ; gentlemen using these boats shall pay the boatmen.

6. Each gentleman must be accompanied by an attendant, who shall be appointed by the proprietors, and told off to attend on him by the head water-keeper.

7. All disputes between gentlemen angling on the river, with regard to angling, shall be referred to and decided by the proprietors.

8. All complaints against attendants, boatmen, etc., shall be made to the proprietors at their office at Ballyshannon.

9. No attendant shall retain a throw for a gentleman during his absence.

10. Gentlemen desiring to angle in the river must take out an angling licence in the Ballyshannon fishery district.

11. The artificial salmon fly only shall be used on the river between the falls at Ballyshannon and the head of the fish-pass above Belleek. If any person be found using, for the capture of salmon on this portion of the river, any shrimp, worm, spinning or other bait, or any other means of capture than the single salmon rod and the artificial fly, his permission to angle shall be forthwith cancelled, and the proprietors will not extend to such person permission in any future year to angle on the river.

12. The proprietors shall forthwith turn off the river any attendant who shall not immediately report to them any breach of Regulation 11, and such attendant will not be re-appointed by them in any future year.

R. L. Moore.

There are three draft-nets and one stake-net working from the 1st of May to the 19th of August. The rods commence on the 20th of May and continue to the 30th of September. According to the List of Annual Close Times, issued in the last part of 1901 by the Fishmongers' Company, both nets and rods are allowed to begin work on the 1st of March, and that they do not do so is probably only because there are absolutely no fish running until two

months later, which is only one more instance amongst very many others of a river being declared open by our law-makers long before it is opened by the Fish-maker.

Wading trousers are indispensable; but though the wading is deep it is good in most places. The rod should not be less than seventeen feet in length. The gaff is used until the 1st of September, after which date the landing-net takes its place for the remainder of the season.

Dark days, a west wind, with a medium height of water, are the best; but how long the river will remain in order is a matter of chance, to be decided by the opening of the sluice-gates at Enniskillen and Belleek.

Salmon average 15 lb. and grilse 8½ lb., while there is no sea-trout angling worth mentioning. The brown trouting is good, and there is a charge for this of 20s. for six days, 10s. for three days, or 4s. a day. No salmon casts may be fished by the trouters, and flies suited for the taking of salmon may not be used.

The Erne fish are usually packed in rush or straw baskets, the former being much the best, as, unless straw is very clean and dry, it is apt to impart its flavour—or rather the flavour it *smells* of—to any fish packed in it for many hours. In summer one often has to consider the best way of packing fish so as to ensure their arrival in good order at the end of a long journey. Green flags are the best things to use in very hot weather, but they should be cut a day or two before they are used, and spread out to dry under cover. Then, having caught your fish, take care to have it wiped down with a clean cloth and under the fins, so as to leave no moisture about it.

Packed dry in dry flags and sent off the day they are killed, we have found that fish stand a two days' carriage

THE ERNE FALLS AT BALLYSHANNON

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in the hottest weather by rail or post, and arrive in perfect order.

There are sixty-seven named casts or throws, of which perhaps the best are Fish Pass, the Colonel's Throw, Point of Mullins, the Ford, Tail of Island, Clarke's Cot, Moss Row, Branley's Hole, Captain's Rock, Grass Yard, Bank of Ireland, Mulligan's Hole, Garden Wall, Sod Ditch, Holly Bush, Kelly's Bank, Jack's Flat, Laputa, Cherry Mount, and the Bridge at Ballyshannon.

The Erne flies are smallish, being lightly but very gaudily winged, with hardly any hackle and very thin bodies, yellow being the favourite colour. The Green Parson, Black and Silk, Orange and Grouse, Claret and Olive, Claret and Jay, Pink and Orange, are all standard favourites; but a visit to Rogan at Ballyshannon will soon put the angler in possession of all the killers.

Here are the takes made by the rods since—

1881,	when	53	rods	took	904 fish.
1882	,,	41	,,	539	,,
1883	,,	42	,,	803	,,
1884	,,	43	,,	444	,,
1885	,,	46	,,	800	,,
1886	,,	28	,,	502	,,
1887	,,	34	,,	419	,,
1888	,,	34	,,	530	,,
1889	,,	36	,,	163	,,
1890	,,	40	,,	392	,,
1891	,,	45	,,	422	,,
1892	,,	37	,,	408	,,
1893	,,	45	,,	308	,,
1894	,,	46	,,	610	,,
1895	,,	46	,,	263	,,
1896	,,	63	,,	343	,,
1897	,,	49	,,	291	,,
1898	,,	43	,,	213	,,
1899	,,	33	,,	149	,,
1900	,,	55	,,	286	,,

The first ten years show a total of 5496 fish—let us say 5500—or an average of 550 each season to an average of forty-two anglers each year, which gives 13 fish to each rod.

The last ten years give 3293 fish—in round numbers 3300—or 330 per season to an average of forty-six rods each season, or just over 7 fish to every rod.

It will be seen that 1881 was the best year, while 1899 was the worst. If these 330 fish, the average of the last decade, gave a mean weight of 10 lb.—and lumping salmon and grilse together, it would not be far off that—then the rods took about a ton and a half of fish; and supposing that the nets took twenty-five fish for each one got by the rod, then their take would amount to thirty-seven and a half tons per season, a terrible falling-off from the record one of 1819, which yielded one hundred and thirteen tons, while seventy and eighty tons was the normal take of the days when close times existed not, while it is equally certain that the salmon were not poached in the sea.

The cream of the Erne season is from the middle of June to the middle of August. In the great year of 1881—

Mr. L. Lutwych	had	36 in	5 weeks.
Captain Gaussen	„	62 „	11 „
Mr. R. Crawford	„	53 „	11 „
Mr. E. P. Bates	„	68 „	6 „
Mr. H. J. Simmonds	„	85 „	6 „
Mr. C. Prescott	„	55 „	4 „
Mr. T. Tatham	„	42 „	4 „
Dr. Andrews	„	45 „	3 „
Sir Ford North	„	43 „	7 „

In the season of 1883 Mr. E. P. Bates made the highest recorded score of late years, as in five weeks he took no less than 114 fish, weighing 1100 lb., in which there was one splendid fellow of 52 lb.

EEL WEIRS AT BELLEEK

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In season 1885—

Mr. Phipps Cooper	had	58	in 5	weeks.
Mr. H. L. Kerr	„	40	„ 3	„
Mr. H. J. Simmonds	„	48	„ 8	„
Mr. E. P. Bates	„	79	„ 6	„
Captain Fullerton	„	53	„ 5	„

And then coming to more recent times—

Sir Henry B. Robertson	had	29	in 2	weeks.
General Dickens	„	24	„ 2	„
Mr. E. P. Bates	„	43	„ 4	„
Mr. J. M. Somerville	„	45	„ 4	„
Mr. R. E. Graves	„	34	„ 4	„
Mr. J. Arkell	„	43	„ 3	„

In season 1895—

Mr. J. Hone had 24 in 4 weeks,

two of them over 20 lb., from the Ford and Moss Row.

Mr. J. G. Vokins had 22 in 3 weeks,

one of 30 lb., from "Causan-na-Mhanaig" ("The wing above the flag").

In 1896—

Mr. J. G. Vokins	had	28	in 3	weeks.
Sir H. B. Robertson	„	33	„ 4	„

In 1897—

Mr. T. M. Pike had 57 in 16 weeks,

amongst them one of 36 lb., from "Laputa."

Sir H. B. Robertson had 18 in 3 weeks.

In 1900—

Sir H. B. Robertson	had	24	in 3	weeks.
Mr. T. M. Pike	„	31	„ 4	„
Mr. A. Marf	„	23	„ 4	„

From these statistics it will be seen that, although the Erne angling has greatly fallen off, it is by no means to be despised. Where can an angler go to in Scotland

between the middle of June and the middle of August and get any sport approaching that which the Erne offers? There is not one single river in Scotland from which he could have the smallest chance of averaging a fish a day for a month, with eight of them set apart for his very own, at anything like the modest sum asked on the Erne; for across the Border the rent of a piece of water that would come up to such a standard would be nearer £200 a month than £16!

Mr. Moore had a hatchery at Cliff, and employed upwards of two hundred bailiffs, who protected the river up to Belturbet—not that anyone has much belief in the protection afforded by Irish bailiffs, for a man will not arrest his father or his brother or other relations for a pay of a few pounds. No; he will pocket the money, which is a help, and join in the poaching instead of stopping it! Of course, the question of the falling-off in the Erne has been much discussed, even as it has been with regard to every other river. Certainly it cannot be attributed to over-netting by Mr. Moore's nets, which are not numerous, and, of course, observe all the close times strictly. In our humble opinion it is poaching pure and simple that is gradually ruining this splendid river, for in the tributaries the fish are poached as soon as they reach the beds and before they have spawned; while in the sea, drift-nets fish night and day in Donegal Bay up to about the mouth of the Teelin and much farther north. They fish regardless of close time, and are unlicensed; they carry on their traffic under the noses of the police and coastguards. These drift-nets have been declared illegal in Scotland, and it is a mystery why they should be unlawful in one sea of the kingdom and yet lawful in another. These drift- or hang-nets are

the most destructive and wasteful that have ever been invented. They not only kill alike kelts and clean fish, but they are wasteful to a degree, for numbers of fish become disentangled and sink to the bottom of the sea; while those that are brought into the boat are blown up to an unnatural size by having been hanged for hours and left dead in the water, and are as much unfit for human food as any drowned or strangled animal. Sir James Musgrave, in giving his evidence before the Fishery Commission of 1900, spoke very strongly of the damage done to his Teelin Fishery and to the Erne by these drift-nets.

His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, when approached on this matter by Sir James, said "that he did not consider it was the duty of the police or the coastguards to protect private interests. He said it was just like watching game."

Says Sir James in reply: "There may be some ground for that, but the analogy is not at all perfect, because fish are preserved in the interests of the nation in order to have a supply of food, but it does not matter very much to the nation whether grouse increase or decrease; but salmon is absolutely necessary, and anything that increased the quantity of salmon produced adds to the food of the nation."

In this we do not agree with Sir James, for we think cheap game is quite as much and even a greater public necessity than cheap salmon (which, by the way, never has been cheap), for there is more nourishment in a half-crown pheasant than there is in a pound of salmon, or even in 2 lb.

We quite agree with the Lord Lieutenant; but with all due deference to so great an authority, we venture to say circumstances alter cases, and that if game in England and

Scotland was as difficult to preserve as it is in Ireland, where anything approaching strong preservation can only be carried on by a *daily* risk to the lives of the keepers, and even of their employers, that then there would be no more game in Great Britain than there is in Ireland ; and there is more game killed each year in the county of Yorkshire than in the whole of Ireland put together.

It is only just in a few places that game preservation is possible in the Emerald Isle, and there are thousands of acres on the west coast which might be made to give as good a yield of grouse as the west-coast heather of Argyll, Inverness, Ross-shire, and Sutherland.

The climates of the two coasts hardly differ, and nothing but the apparently ineradicable poaching nature of the Irish peasantry stands between the conversion of Ireland into nearly as fine a sporting country as Scotland.

Whether under the circumstances of the prevailing lawlessness it is wise to order the police and the coastguard not to interfere where poaching goes on under their noses, which is but too likely to lead to bloodshed, is a question which we leave to be argued by those who know more of the subject than we can claim to do.

Of course, the police and coastguard will interfere if they see violence used; but to allow a man who is trying to prevent a breach of the law to be half or wholly murdered before the time for interference arrives seems a queer way of doing business.

If our readers will refer to the chapter on the Spiddal River of Galway, they will see that our views agree with those of that eminent judge, the late Lord Morris.

In fact, " willy-nilly," we would like to try and make Ireland, in spite of native cunning, ignorance, and opposi-

tion, into the fine sporting country it ought to be. Thousands of pounds would then be spent where now only hundreds are disbursed; and surely, when once the expenditure of the thousands was established, "Pat" would not be such a fool as to wish to revert to the days of lawlessness, semi-starvation, and the spending of beggarly hundreds!

Again, the fines for poaching are ridiculously small. To mention one instance only—a fine of 5s. was imposed on some poachers in the Erne district, which later on was reduced to 1s.! Of this the Conservators got 8d., while it cost them 30s. to prosecute! Could there be a greater farce than this? Small wonder the poachers thrive.

It was stated before the Fishery Commissioners of 1900 that every fish an angler got on the Erne cost him £7, 10s., which was spent in the district. But surely this must be too high an estimate; for take a year like 1893, when 610 fish were got by forty-five rods—nearly 14 fish for each: surely they did not spend between them £4725 in Ballyshannon and Belleek, for that is just £105 a rod. In the bad year of 1899, thirty-three anglers only got 149 fish, which at £7, 10s. each would represent an outlay of £1117, 10s., or about £34 for each rod.

It seems to us impossible to arrive at any definite result as to what each fish may cost an individual angler on the Erne. The angling charge, we know, costs £4 for the six days. We will suppose the hotel bill to be 20s. a day, and a stay of eight days to be made; and allowing another 20s. a day for ghillies and "Parsons" from Rogan, we reach a total of £18 a week. After that, skill and luck must have something to say to the result. Take the case of Sir Henry B. Robertson of Palè, Corwen, who in 1896

captured thirty-three fish in four weeks. Surely it did not cost him close on £250 to catch them, which it would have done at £7, 10s. a fish. According to our calculation, 50s. each is nearer the mark, which of course does not allow anything for the value of the eight fish he was entitled to keep. But "blow the expense," and no matter the exact number of fish caught, an angler cannot fail to be pleased with the Erne, for it is an ideal river, which, though not a patch on its former self, still compares favourably with any other in Ireland.

We will now take leave of Ballyshannon, and plunge into a district of water, rock, morass, and peat, known as the county of Donegal. A drive of some twelve miles along the coast to the north will bring us into the old town of Donegal, through which flows the Eask River, emptying the lake of the same name. There is a fair hotel, and those who stay at it can get leave to fish both lake—in which there are ferox—and river. The angling is never let, and is only worth serious attention after the first big July flood, when sea trout rather than salmon provide the greater part of the sport. But as netting, which begins on the 1st of April, may be continued up to the 18th of September, the fish that are caught by the rod after that, and when they are most plentiful, are seldom in good condition. This date of the 18th of September is a remarkable one, which must greatly favour the poacher, seeing that netting on the Erne, a few miles to the south of Eask mouth, together with the netting of the Inver and the Teelin Fishery, a few miles to the west of Eask, comes to an end on the 20th of August.

Some five miles to the west of Donegal the Inver or Eany falls into Inver Bay—a sweet little river to fish when

in flood any time after the beginning of July. The angling is never let, and belongs to the Marquis of Conyngham, who has a house close to the river at Mount Charles, from which place the second title of the family is derived.

Working our way round the coast, the railway will take us to Killybegs, and then an hour and a half in a car will bring us to the Glen River, also called Carrick or Teelin Water, as it falls into the head of Teelin Bay. Sir James Musgrave of Carrick Lodge owns the whole of the Glen and its tributaries, of which the Yellow River is the largest. Also he has a several fishery on the north side of the coast up to Claude Anthony's Rock, and to Muckross Point on the south, in which distance he employs five boats working trammel-nets (which must not be confounded with the poaching drift-nets), each boat having a crew of seven men.

When dealing with the Erne I have already quoted what Sir James told the Commissioners with reference to the damage done to the Erne and to his Teelin Fishery by these drift-nets. On that occasion he proceeded further to say that, with regard to his own rights, "I can distinctly state that when I tot up the cost of watching and the boats' crews that fish for me, and the cost of the licences, for the last two or three years, there has been an absolute loss. If I could but get a fair share of the fish I produce in my waters, then I would spend money on hatcheries; even as it is, I have made a ladder from the river to Lake Unna, which is a success."

Nevertheless, the take of salmon by Sir James's nets has, at the present time, fallen to about one-half of what it was. Sir James tells me he would be willing to let the angling; while there is a capital inn at

Carrick to stay at. So long as it is not let, applications for leave to fish should be addressed to Sir James's agent, Mr. Arthur Brooke, J.P., Whitehouse, Killybegs. Waders are not required; while no other lure than the fly is permitted. The small patterns of the Erne will usually be killers; a fourteen-foot rod will cover the water. August and September are the best months for salmon and grilse, the former averaging 10 lb. and the latter 5 lb. July is the best month for sea trout, which are plentiful, and run from 1 lb. to 2 lb.

The river remains in order for two or three days after a flood, and from it Mr. Kennedy and his son once took twenty-one fish in a day, but we could not find out the date of this fine bit of sport. The Glen holds sixteen principal pools, the best of which are the Long, the Otter, Johnston's, Spencer's, Paddy Ward, and Frank Paddy. It opens for nets and rods on the 1st of March, and remains so for the latter till the 9th of October, though the nets come off on the 20th of August. Why on earth any river should be declared "open" by law on the 1st of March, when no fish ever come into it until two months later, is indeed a puzzle.

We will now charter a car at Carrick for a drive across the peninsula formed by the extreme west part of Donegal, making as near a bee-line as we can for the inn at Ardara, where the rivers Owentocker (twelve miles) and Owenea or Glenties (sixteen miles) fall into Lough-Ros-More Bay.

The nets begin on the 1st of June and continue to fish until the 31st of August, which is a most reasonable and sensible close time for rivers into which fish do not run until the summer months. The rods, however, may begin on the 1st of April and continue to the 30th of September.

Inside the bar the estuary is fished by two nets, which captured in—

Salmon and Grilse

1889	2967	1895	2169
1890	1975	1896	3014
1891	3441	1897	1666
1892	2558	1898	1745
1893	1997	1899	1501
1894	4163		

The above returns are worthy of careful study, inasmuch as but few of the same clear nature have been obtainable from any of the larger fisheries, who only tell us that in such and such a year their take was so much per cent. more or less than the previous one, while they suppress the actual numbers that have been caught.

Cause and effect are very apparent in this return. Up to 1894 there were only two boats fishing *outside* the bar; in 1897 there were ten at work, and to their united take may be attributed the decreases shown by the returns of 1897, 1898, and 1899.

Another somewhat remarkable thing in connection with these rivers is that though the natives poach hard, they poach in a gentlemanly way, only taking the fish when they are in their best condition, and not interfering with them on the spawning beds, as is the abominable custom in most places.

For this new phase of Irish poaching the proximity of the railway station at Killybegs is probably answerable, for as the police have no power of search, boxes of fish are easily sent to market; and as there is a good deal more money to be made by a traffic in clean fish than there is by gaffing unseasonable and uneatable fish off the spawning beds, the natives have sense enough to abstain from

killing the geese that lay the golden eggs. At any rate, this form of poaching is an improvement on the usual style.

The hotel at Ardara, kept by Neil McNelis, is quite a comfortable one. Both rivers are attached to it, and the charge for fishing them, with board, per week is £3, 10s.—reasonable enough in all conscience.

April and May are *sometimes* good months, but July and August are more certain. Waders are not wanted for the rivers, though some anglers carry them to those lakes on which there are no boats.

As many as forty salmon and grilse have fallen to one rod in a few weeks, and when the Owenea is right, one or two fish a day ought to be got. This is the best and largest of the two streams, and is often taken by two or three friends for the season ; so before going to Ardara it will be as well to send a line to McNelis to find out what arrangements have been made.

At Glenties, some six miles up from the mouth of the Owenea, the Marquis of Conyngham has a small hatchery ; also there is a good hotel, and as Glenties is likewise a railway terminus, it is usually pretty full of anglers.

Ten miles to the north of Glenties comes the Gweebarra River, belonging to the Marquis of Conyngham, and falling, after a run of twenty miles bordered on either side by ridges of high hills, into Gweebarra Bay.

The two nets in the estuary are rented by Messrs. Petrie, and work between the 1st of April and the 30th of September, an unusually late date, while the rods keep on till the end of October. The angling for many years has been let to the Earl of Mayo, who well describes this river as " a typical, short, peaty, west-coast, Irish salmon river, such

as abound and run into the Atlantic, full of salmon, though they are sluggish at taking."

After crossing the Gweebarra at Doochary Bridge, a further drive of ten miles will land us at Dungloe and the lakes of the Rosses Fishery, more famed for their white trout than for their salmon. They consist of a chain of six lakes, of which Lough Dungloe and Lough Tully are the best. The hotel is good, while the lessee of the fishery has started a hatchery, and is sparing neither trouble nor expense in his efforts to make the white-trout angling of these pretty lakes second to none, and we venture to prophesy that he will succeed, as he deserves to do.

Proceeding northwards from Dungloe, in about twelve miles we reach the excellent hotel of Gweedore, attached to which are the anglings of the Claudy and Gweedore (or Crolly) rivers, the whole belonging to Captain A. B. Hill. The first-named stream is by far the better of the two, and in former days it has yielded some remarkable scores. Opening on the 4th of February for rods and nets, these latter do not really begin to fish till the 1st of April; and ceasing on the 20th of August, the rods continue up to the 31st of October. The reserved angling of the Claudy River consists of about five miles of both banks, in which there are twenty-two named pools, all easily cast from the bank with a rod of from fourteen to sixteen feet. Spring fish begin to run the first week in April, the grilse following early in June, the former averaging 10 lb., the latter 6 lb. Thus April and May are best for springers, June and July for grilse, August and September for sea trout. The gaff may not be used before the 15th of August; flies range from medium to quite a small size, the favourites being Jock Scot, Fiery Brown, Claret, Black and Silver, and

Grey Monkey, while the worm is the only other lure that is of any use.

Wet weather, which is usually plentiful, suits the river best, a flood keeping it in order for a week or ten days. In the good times Mr. James Mott landed twenty-four fish one July day, while Mr. Lee-Carpenter had days of twenty and fifteen; and although those are takes not to be made nowadays, the sport that the Claudy still offers is by no means to be despised.

In 1899 the first spring fish was taken on the 25th of March; then on

April 29th	one rod had	3 fish.
May 22nd	one ,,	5 ,,
June 29th	four rods had	5 ,,
July 4th	four ,,	28 ,,
July 11th	four ,,	15 ,,
July 18th	four rods took	8 ,,
August 16th	three ,,	9 ,,
September 18th	two ,,	9 ,,
September 28th	four ,,	17 ,,

and altogether 113 fish were captured. In 1900 General Warren had twenty fish in nine days; in 1901 Captain Pulley had nineteen fish in eleven days.

Annexed are the rules of the fishery.

Fishing

There is fishing for salmon, sea and brown trout. Gentlemen staying at the Gweedore Hotel may fish for sea or brown trout on the lakes and a portion of the Claudy River free of charge. There is also the magnificent salmon fishing of the Claudy River, for which tickets may be obtained at the hotel at the following rates :—

For months of April and May—

Single rod free, per day ——

For months of June, July, and August—

Single rod :	£0 10 per day	(1 fish free).
,,	2 10 per week	(2 ,,).
,,	9 0 per month (four weeks)	(2 ,, per week).

Reduced rates for September. October free.

GWEEDORE

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Boats for angling on the lakes, 2s. per day, and each man employed in the boat 2s. 6d. per day.

Regulations

One-day tickets are available on the day of issue only.

Weekly tickets are available for six consecutive days from date of issue, Sundays excepted.

Monthly tickets are available for twenty-four days from date of issue, Sundays excepted.

Not more than five tickets will be issued for any one day, and not more than two monthly or three weekly tickets will be issued concurrently.

Tickets will be issued to visitors in the order in which they are applied for at the office.

All salmon caught to be delivered same day, in good order, at the ice-house, Bunbeg, subject to the following :—

One-day ticket entitles holder to one fish free.

Weekly and monthly tickets entitle holders to two fish free per week.

The hotel charges are 63s. a week, while the most direct route to Gweedore is *via* Letterkenny or Finntown ; but all and every information, including particulars of the " catch " of the last season, can be had by dropping a line to The Manager, and before starting for a stay at Gweedore it is always wiser to do this to make sure of rooms and a rod.

GWEEDORE HOTEL

List of Salmon caught by Visitors during Seasons 1908–1912

1908	Salmon.	Weight.
May	3	24 lb.
June.	55	254½ „
July	49	278½ „
August	13	55¼ „
September	13	73 „
October	13	6½ „
Total	146	691¾ „

	Salmon.	Weight.
1909		
March	2	30 lb.
April	3	26½ ,,
May	8	71 ,,
June	69	386½ ,,
July	84	452½ ,,
August	14	80¼ ,,
September	24	149¼ ,,
October	6	23½ ,,
Total	210	1219½ ,,
1910		
April	5	46½ ,,
May	11	117 ,,
June	76	411 ,,
July	64	321 ,,
August	25	145½ ,,
September	2	11½ ,,
October	3	15½ ,,
Total	186	1068 ,,
1911		
May	14	
June	51	
July	58	
1912		
April	6	54¼ ,,
May	4	40¼ ,,
June	64	369¼ ,,
July	22	123¼ ,,
August	16	109¼ ,,
September	7	49½ ,,
Total	119	765¾ ,,

Quitting now the broken and rugged Donegal shore—for to follow it right round from Gweedore to Rathmelton

would be only wasting time on a very wild and long coast-line, on which accommodation is scarce and primitive, while in the whole distance, though there are many streams, there is only one small salmon river, with a course of sixteen miles, the Owencarrow, falling into the sea at Lackagh Bridge at the head of Sheep Haven. Therefore, instead of making this uncomfortable trip—more suitable for a seal than for a fisherman—we will post across country to Letterkenny, and then on to Ramelton, or Rathmelton, at the mouth of

THE LENNAN.

Here we enter on the northern outskirts of the zone of the poisonous flax water, which extends from Ramelton southwards all over the eastern side of Donegal, and while embracing the northern and eastern parts of Tyrone, it includes the whole of the counties of Londonderry and Antrim. This dreaded refuse, which is fully as much a poison as spurge, is turned into the rivers in August and September. If this is done in a time of drought, then the bulk of the salmon that are near the point of entry, together with the whole of the fry, will be killed. If, on the other hand, the river happens to be running big, then only a portion of the fry are killed, while the full-grown fish are made so sick that they will look at no lure for days afterwards.

To the casual tourist-angler of these parts of Ireland it seems as if the emptying of this poison into the rivers was done out of pure devilment, and from a malicious desire to destroy the fish, while ruining the angling; and verily we believe that this is actually the case in some instances. At any rate, it would be simple and inexpensive

for the flax steepers to provide the means of running this flax water on to the lands near by, for it has been proved to make an excellent fertiliser when so distributed. Of course, it is illegal to turn flax water into a river, but the steepers well know that the magistrates, many of whom are offenders themselves, wink at the offence, and impose but a trifling fine if the conviction be obtained—rarely more than half a crown, while in several instances it has been one penny! However, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, so fish preservers and anglers may fairly rejoice in the statement recently made by Mr. Horace Plunkett, that flax cultivation is greatly on the wane; but unless flax disappears altogether, or unless the police are instructed, as they should be, to take the matter in hand, then it seems as if there never would be any change for the better.

But to return to the Lennan. The largest of the North Donegal rivers, with a course of close on thirty miles, it rises in the eastern slopes of the same hills that send forth the Gweebarra to the Atlantic from their western ones. It soon expands into Lough Garten, and then, continuing its course for a further ten miles and passing Kilmacrennan (above which Sir Harry Stewart of Fort Stewart owns the fishing rights), it shortly enters Lough Fern, and issuing thence, has another run of five miles ere finding its way into Lough Swilly.

The Lennan is quite a sluggish river, the angling being chiefly confined to Lough Fern and that portion of the river lying between the lake and the sea, in which there are some nice pools and rapids. Rods commence on the 1st of February, the nets following on the 4th and coming off on the 19th of August, the anglers fishing until the

THE WEIR ON THE LENNAN

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31st of October. It is netted at the mouth by two bag-nets and a draft-net, which took in

1897	1870 fish.
1898	2676 „
1899	3552 „

with the average weight of 13 lb. for salmon and 6 lb. for grilse. It is usually an early river, and good from the opening to the end of April; but, strange to relate, in 1899 the bulk of the fish ran in May, June, and July. This river is netted with great fairness, the manager, Mr. G. Hewson, J.P. (who also has the upper fishery of Lough Gill, and manages the Drumcliffe River flowing from Lough Glencar), working the Lennan nets on the theory, to use his own words, "that if you let plenty of fish up you are rewarded for it."

Thus the Lennan has not only held its own at a period when all other rivers have been falling off, but has actually made a marked improvement.

Angling as a rule is pretty well over by the end of June. The hotel at Ramelton has boats on Lough Fern; while the great stronghold of the fish in the river is "The Pool" below the weir. In the season of 1901 eighty-eight fish were taken out of it, sixty of which fell to the rod of Mr. D. J. W. Edwardes of Rhyd-y-gôrs, Carmarthen.

With the reader's permission, we will shirk the long journey round the Inishowen peninsula, and so avoid the monotonous description of a number of short streams it sends into the sea, of which the Roe (thirty-four miles), falling into the east shore of Lough Foyle, and the Crana (twelve miles) at Buncrana, are perhaps the best. Therefore we will take train to Londonderry on the Foyle, which, however, is no use as an angling river, for its long, narrow

estuary of twenty miles is all tidal, and only good for the nets, which may begin on the 15th of April and continue to the 31st of August. They are worked by the Foyle and Bann Fishery Company; but inasmuch as no clean fish has ever been netted before the 14th of May, the privilege conferred by opening the river a month earlier is of no benefit to anyone except the poachers of kelts.

The chief run of fish is from the middle of July to the middle of August. The average weight of salmon is 10 lb. and of grilse 6 lb., while the heaviest ever taken in recent years was 28 lb. Therefore, so far as angling is concerned, there is no need to make any stay in the celebrated city, and we will hasten on to Lifford, opposite to Strabane, where the Finn and the Mourne unite.

Shortly before reaching Lifford the railway crosses the Deele River—a good-sized but sluggish stream, with a course of twenty-five miles. It has never been noted as a rod river, but is worthy of mention as a flagrant example of flax-water poisoning.

As far back as Henry VIII. the Deele was famed for the quality and quantity of salmon netted from it, while up to 1820 or thereabouts that reputation was fully maintained, fish being so plentiful that they were hawked round the neighbourhood at twopence a pound; for in those days there were no means of sending them to market. Then flax cultivation began, and has increased to such an extent that at length the pollution has destroyed all vestige of fish life: the poor Deele has become worthless, while its owners have been robbed of the income they once derived from the netting.

As a witness pathetically stated before the Commissioners: "This is the only thing in the world I possess—

THE POOL, LENNAN

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this little river—and it is not worth a pinch of snuff to me owing to the poisoning."

The Finn, with a course of forty miles, rises from the lake of the same name, lying a few miles to the north-east of Glenties.

The angling is very poor, and is open to the public, except a short stretch at Clogham.

The best month is September, though the rod may be used from 1st April to 10th October, which dates apply to all the other tributaries of the Foyle.[1]

The Mourne flows between Strabane and Newtown Stewart, a distance of about ten miles. Quite close to this last-named place it is joined on the west by the Derg, flowing from Lough Derg, with a course of twenty-eight miles, while nearly opposite, coming in from the east, are the Glenelly (thirty miles) and the Owenkillow (also thirty miles).

Between Newtown Stewart and Omagh, a distance of some twenty miles, the river is called the Strule, which receives many small tributaries, of which the Fairy Water (eighteen miles) is the largest. Altogether the Mourne with its tributaries offers the angler a nearly free run over upwards of fifty miles of water.

Of course, free fishing for salmon means fierce competition for all likely catches the moment any of them are in order, and when it can be stated that one hundred and thirty-four rod-licences were taken out last season in this district, the tourist angler will see that he will not have much water exactly to himself.

Waders are necessary; while it is of no use attempting to fish before the middle of June, but there are more fish

[1] Save in Culdaff, which is between 15th October and 1st March.

got in September than in any other month, though, of course, they are then going off colour. Lures of all sorts are freely used, the local anglers preferring a spinning lure, the collie for choice, rather than the fly, while many of them fish to sell.

Mrs. Marshall's Abercorn Hotel at Newtown Stewart is comfortable and well placed for the whole district. The Duke of Abercorn keeps a small part of the Mourne in his own hands, and in the absence of His Grace leave is sometimes given for a day or two. For those anglers, however, who like a pool or two to themselves, the Foyle and Bann Fishery Company have leased about three miles of the best part of the river close to Newtown Stewart. The rules are as follows :—

Regulations for the Angling for Salmon and Trout in the Rivers Strule and Glenelly

1. Angling will be let for salmon and trout, with single rod and line, on the fisheries of the Foyle and Bann Fishery Company in the rivers Strule and Glenelly, from the junction of the Derg with the Strule up to Lislap West on the Strule, and up to Crosh on the Glenelly.

	£	s.	d.
Price of season ticket . .	4	0	0
Price of weekly ticket . .	0	10	0

Tickets will only be issued to a person holding a salmon angling licence issued out of the Londonderry district.

2. To angle for trout only.

	£	s.	d.
Trout ticket for the season . .	0	5	0

Tickets can be had from

William Henry West,
Post Office, Newtown Stewart ;

or at

The Foyle and Bann Fishery Company's Office,
Victoria Road, Londonderry.

Salmon run to about 10 lb. and grilse 6 lb., and recently one rod on the free waters took sixty fish during the season.

There are also a good few sea trout running from early in June. The angler contemplating a skirmish on these free waters must not forget that the flax water comes into the river chiefly in August ; also he had better provide himself with two licences, one taken in the Londonderry district and one outside it, for the local anglers are furious at the Foyle Company presuming to *rent* fishings which have till recently been free to them, and to revenge themselves they are taking out their licences outside the district, while many of the farmers will give no leave to anyone with a licence from the Company. No doubt time will smooth away this ill-feeling, and the objectors will eventually come to recognise that anyone is entitled to let his angling just as much as his house.

CHAPTER V

The Bann and Bush

THE BANN

Divides the county of Londonderry from Antrim for the greater part of its course between Lough Neagh and the sea. With a total length of seventy-six miles, the Upper Bann rises in the Eagle Mount of County Down, and passing the towns of Banbridge and Portnadown, ten miles to the north it enters Lough Neagh, the largest of all the lakes of the United Kingdom. Issuing from this vast sheet of water at Toome Bridge, it then passes into Lough Beg, which is but a few miles in length. From the point where it leaves this small lake it has a run of about thirty miles before it flows through Coleraine, to fall into the sea of the North Channel to the east of Magilligan Point of Lough Foyle, while through its mouth is discharged the drainage of no less than two thousand and forty-two square miles of country.

Lough Neagh is over twelve miles in length by ten in breadth, and receives the waters of many large streams, which in their turn have numerous small tributaries. Commencing at the north-east end of the lake and working right round it, the first river met with is the Main, which rises in the centre of County Antrim, and flowing nearly

due south for thirty-four miles, falls into Lough Neagh close to Randalstown. Next comes the Six Mile Water, with a run of twenty miles, and entering the lake at Antrim town. The Blackwater (fifty-seven miles) falls into the west corner of the south end of the lake. The Ballinderry (thirty miles) has its outfall in the centre of the west shore ; while the Moyola (thirty miles) enters a little to the west of Toome Bridge. Here, then, are one hundred and seventy miles of streams falling into Lough Neagh, to which must be added a number of smaller ones not worth mentioning as salmon rivers.

As the Upper Bann, with its sluggish, dirty waters, need not be discussed as a salmon angling river, it is only with the lower portion, lying between Toome Bridge and the sea, that we have to deal.

The Bann is open for netting from the 4th of February to the 20th of August, while the rods begin on the 1st of March and may be plied up to the 30th of September, although but very little sport is to be had until quite the end of April.

Salmon average about 14 lb., with grilse running between 6 lb. and 7 lb., while both of them are much better for the table than the majority of Irish fish ; so much so that it is suspected that Bann salmon appear as Scotch ones on many of the slabs of the London fishmongers.

The Bann is a deep, quiet-flowing river, not so much affected by floods as a shallower one would be, for which reason it fishes best in medium water with a gentle breeze. There are no rules against the use of the gaff. A sixteen to eighteen foot rod will be wanted. The fly is the only lure permitted, while the Irish and Scotch standards will do execution. Most of the angling is carried on from boats,

THE BANN FALLS AT COLERAINE

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the pick of the season being from the 20th of May to the middle of August, or up to the time when the flax water begins to appear. The best angling section is that of Carnroe or Caronroe, rented by Mr. Walter H. Wilson of Queen's Island, Belfast, who has known the Bann with its tributaries for many years, and whose interesting evidence given before the Fishery Commission in 1900 will be alluded to later on. In one week of May 1901 he had twenty-four fish, weighing 324 lb., or over 13 lb. each. In a July week thirty-seven were got on this water by Mr. Wilson's friends, one of them taking six in a day. In another week of the same month twenty-two were taken, and then on the 26th of July and three following days Mr. Wilson had twenty-three to his own rod, averaging 9 lb.; and altogether there were fully 150 fish got from this section, with about half that number from the ticket water at Kilrea. A large part of the Bann can be fished by weekly or by season tickets. The best section lies between Portna Navigation Weir and the weir at Movanagher. A season ticket on this reach is £7, 7s., and a weekly one 21s. Another stretch of water lies between Agivey Bridge (close to where the Macosquin River joins the main stream) and "The Cutts" near Coleraine, a distance of between four and five miles. Season tickets on this reach are £4, 4s., and weekly ones 12s. 6d. each. Tickets for either fishery may be got by applying to W. Craig, The Cutts, Coleraine, or to J. Robb, Carnroe, Kilrea; and an angler might do worse than spend July at Mercer's Hotel at Kilrea, which is quite a comfortable one, and commands the river to north or south.

Like unto all other rivers, the netting and angling of the Bann declined greatly during the decade from 1888 to 1898,

the lowest returns being reached in 1897 and 1898. The reasons for this are clear enough. While having regard to their nature, and the very harmful character of some of them, it is remarkable that the Bann has been able to make even the poor returns that it has done. That this has been possible is chiefly owing to the energy and ability of Mr. R. L. Moore, the managing director of the Foyle and Bann Fishery Company. In 1894, when the Board of Conservators were in financial difficulties, this Company at once came forward and provided all protection, Mr. Moore giving his personal guarantee to pay the bailiffs their salaries; and since then it has spent about £1000 each year on preservation. A protective steam launch was put on Lough Neagh, while many useless bailiffs were got rid of and replaced by fewer but more reliable men, until then by degrees the income of the Conservators was worked up to £1000 a year, when the whole management once more passed into their hands.

We will now give a list of the evils which the Conservators, in conjunction with the Fishery Company, are trying to suppress—a truly formidable task, with the limited funds at their disposal, and every man's hand against them.

1. The salmon fry in the tributaries are massacred in thousands by being sucked into the unguarded intakes of the numerous turbine wheels, of which there are about a hundred at work, with more to follow; for the old basket wheels, which were harmless to fry, are everywhere being replaced by the more modern turbine.

2. In addition to the pollution of the August flax water, there are also incessant deadly discharges from various bleach and dye works and other manufactories on the tributaries.

3. The abstraction of water by the mills on the tributaries, they being placed so near to each other that in many cases the tail of one race becomes the head race of another.

4. Enormous quantities of salmon fry are taken in the pollen nets of Lough Neagh, of which there are one hundred and forty, in addition to ninety trammel-nets. Likewise the eel-nets work terrible havoc amongst the fry in June, when they are making their way to the sea.

5. Hard poaching prevails all the year round, and is of a desperate character.

6. Then there are the wasteful, destructive drift-nets working round the coasts of the Bann mouth. In 1880 these did not exist, but now they are numerous, each sweeping the sea with nets of one thousand to one thousand two hundred yards in length; while, whether the net be three hundred yards or one thousand yards, the licence costs the same. Now, when these nets were originally licensed three hundred yards was their usual length; but as improvements and practice have enabled them to be used up to one thousand two hundred yards in length (and the longer the net the greater its powers), surely whatever sum was charged for three hundred yards should be charged fourfold for one thousand two hundred yards.

7. The cormorants, mergansers, gulls, and other wild birds that feed on the fry have increased tenfold since they have been protected. Likewise there has been a great multiplication of the "grey lords," or thrashers, pillaging at the mouth of the river; and though boat-loads of them have been caught, their numbers appear undiminished, while those that have been opened all had fry

in them, one greedy rascal being found with five smolts in his stomach.

8. During the open season salmon fry are daily caught in large quantities by boys. Mr. Wilson states he has seen as many as forty lads all capturing fry.

Taking briefly each of these evils in detail, the evidence of Mr. R. L. Moore and others given before the Fishery Commissioners was very clear and strong as to the great numbers of salmon fry killed by the wheels of the turbines, the destruction having been actually witnessed by some of those who gave evidence. It is also worthy of note that the appearance of these turbines, which first started in 1880 to 1885, coincides with the disappearance of the fish, and that since the last-named year the yield of the Bann has gone down fifty per cent. Of course, the law provides for the protection by screens of the intakes of the wheels; but as the guards quickly block up by grass and weeds, the owners of the turbines, in order to save themselves trouble, keep the screens off, only putting them on for a short time now and again when anyone looking like a keeper or a bailiff appears on the scene.[1] Although the turbine owners strongly deny that these wheels kill the salmon fry, nevertheless they will not permit of any experiments being made to prove the truth of their protestations, so thus it looks as if they had a very weak case.

With regard to water abstraction by the mills, the Main, which is, or rather was, one of the best breeding grounds in the district, has been rendered almost worthless by the diversion of the water from its natural course to supply

[1] This blocking up is largely due to placing the screens at right angles to the stream: the trouble would be greatly mitigated by fixing them at an oblique angle.

EEL WEIRS AT TOOME BRIDGE, LOUGH NEAGH,
which are fished a month earlier than any other eel weirs in Ireland, and consequently destroy large quantities of salmon fry.

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the mill races; while it is on this river also that turbines have been so numerously erected.

As to pollution, although flax water is deadly enough, it lasts but for a month or so; while if it escapes into the river when there is plenty of water, the harm it does is reduced to a minimum. A flax tank is usually about one hundred and twenty feet long by ten feet wide and eight feet in depth, and the contents of one of these, if discharged into a stream during a drought, would destroy every fish for a mile or two below. Some seven miles of the Braid, a tributary of the Main, are frequently thus devastated, and at such periods the dead fry can be picked up in basketfuls.

The Six Mile Water with the Kells River have had their salmon exterminated by discharges of chloride of lime from the bleach and dye works on their banks. Of course, pollution of any sort is prohibited by law; but the fines are so small, while the disgrace is *nil*, that most of the flax growers and manufacturers habitually break the law rather than incur the small expense of making a settling tank.

Mr. T. McDermott, the manager of the Kilrea Hatchery, stated before the Commissioners that when he was visiting the Main on the 16th of May 1893, he found the whole bed of the river covered with smolts like bars of silver, all killed by a discharge from one of the many bleaching pots—great metal vessels holding upwards of two thousand gallons each, from which it is easier to pull the plug and send the contents into the river rather than to turn them into a settling pond. In this case Mr. McDermott prosecuted, the result being that the culprit was actually fined the almost unheard-of amount of 10s. !—a miserably

small penalty for killing every fish in at least a mile of water.

To show what an utter farce prosecution for pollution has been brought to, it can be stated that, taking the average of one hundred convictions for pollution, the fines worked out at thirteenpence-halfpenny each !

In the eel-nets during June and July Mr. W. H. Wilson states that he has seen smolts caught by the bushel; and as the nets are set at sunset and not drawn till sunrise, thousands of smolts are drowned in them. As to the hundred and forty pollen-nets of Lough Neagh, each one is a hundred and twenty yards long, with a mesh sufficiently small to hold any smolt; so thus, when they are on their way to the sea in June and July, no haul of these pollen-nets is ever made without some smolts being also caught.

With regard to cormorants, etc., the Protection Act should be suspended, and it should be permissible to destroy them both here and elsewhere when found within some given distance of a river bank or mouth. As to the predatory fishes, there remains nothing to be done but to continue to wage a ceaseless war against them.

With regard to the horrible drift-nets, as they have recently been declared illegal in Scotland, it is devoutly to be hoped that the same sentence may be passed on them in Ireland. They are devilish devices for ruining salmon rivers, for it has been repeatedly shown that wherever they have made their appearance they have never failed to ruin the rivers that fall into the sea round the coasts where these detestable engines worked.

The poaching in the Bann district is of a far more lawless and ferocious nature than usual. Round Lough Neagh

there are a desperate, bad lot of men ; and here, some few years ago, an inspector and two bailiffs were fired on, when the head man, being wounded, nearly lost his life by being brutally knocked about after he had been disabled by a shot. Here too, on a previous occasion, the poachers attempted to burn down a house at Toome Bridge into which they had marked down a party of police ! The evidence given by Mr. W. H. Wilson with regard to this poaching and the angling of the Bann is so interesting that it may well be quoted. He states that twenty years ago the Main was one of the best angling rivers in the north of Ireland, while now it is worthless, for no fish has been taken on it by the rod for several years. As to the Bann, he considers that for one fish that comes into it now there were a hundred formerly ; while those fish that do get through are nearly all poached.

In the Claudy, which flows into the left bank of the Bann near Port Glenone, the moment a fish appears it is wiped out of existence, and a remarkable instance of this is given by Mr. Wilson when a very large salmon took up its quarters in a pool of the Claudy.

" Our club watchers were there taking turns about at watching. I happened to be there on a Friday, and told O'Fee the fish was sure to be caught (I heard it was a very big one), and that if it was caught I should like to see it out of curiosity. O'Fee got some inkling of what was going on, and so on Saturday night he telegraphed for me, saying that the fish had been taken out, and weighed 54 lb., and also that he had got the head—he gave 5s. for it, and sent it me. It was a perfectly wonderful head, but the ugliest I ever saw.

" On another river, the Agivey, there is a mill dam, and

I myself have stood on the bank and expostulated with the fellows. They have raked fish out with gaffs while I stood and watched them; and last year, near the same place, there was a most wonderful performance. Three of our watchers were there, and one great big poaching fellow caught hold of one of these men, carried him into the river, and very nearly drowned him. His colleagues were frightened and ran away, leaving their hats and coats behind them. Poaching is terrible in that district, and the bailiffs are quite inefficient."

Further on Mr. Wilson proceeds to say: "One point which I think important for Ireland is that English people should be induced to come to the country for sport. They would spend an immense amount of money in connection with it if the sport were there. I have put down my own expenditure for boats, ghillies, fishing tackle, rent of my house and the river, and divided it by the number of fish I caught. Ten years ago I considered if I caught one fish for every £3 I did well; this year (1899) I am up to £7, 10s. a fish."

Therefore, if Mr. Wilson has made no mistake, then the 106 fish actually recorded as captured by him and his friends will have cost him £765. And, although this may seem very dear, I have known instances in Scotland where, in certain seasons, fish have cost £20 apiece; but this was only in years of phenomenal drought, the usual cost in ordinary years being about £5 each.

We think, however, that a wandering angler, spending the month of July at Kilrea, would get his sport at a less rate than £7, 10s. a fish. As July is the best month on the Bann, a good, hard-working fisher, who will begin early and work on till dusk, while keeping his fly in the water

all day, and wasting but little time on lunch, should get twenty fish in the month.

Now, supposing he makes himself free to fish on both the ticket waters already mentioned at a cost of 33s. 6d. a week, or £6, 14s. for the month, and adding to that 40s. a week for ghillie and boat, or £8 per month, with a further £30 for his hotel bill, £5 for sundries, and £10 for travelling expenses, we arrive at a total of £59, 14s.—say £3 a fish, if he gets the twenty he ought to do.

We notice Mr. Wilson includes " tackle " in his estimate, but we think that is an item that cannot fairly be taken into account in a calculation of this sort.

In the first place, the expenditure on rods and tackle is a very elastic one, depending on the wealth and taste of each individual angler. We know one gentleman — a first-rate performer, too—who never goes a-fishing without taking a box of five thousand flies, all shop-made, accompanied by eight or ten of Hardy's best split-cane rods, with all other tackle to match. Surely it would not be fair to charge these items to an account like the above ?

Though personally not indulging in anything like this profuseness, we have accumulated such a stock of tackle that we can always start at a moment's notice to fish any river in the United Kingdom, and so can hundreds of others, without the further outlay of one penny. Of course, the wear and tear of tackle has to be replaced, but once well supplied with rods, reels, and flies, then a few gut casting-lines each season are all one requires, though now and again one is tempted to spend a few pounds on local flies, which probably could have been dispensed with had the angler been content to stick to the old standards.

But new patterns of flies have a charm that few anglers with spare cash can resist.

We think, too, that our estimate for the month's expenses has been made on the liberal side, for an angler who took lodgings instead of going to an hotel would be able to considerably reduce the £30 allowed for living.

We have alluded to this matter somewhat at length, because we note that, in the Report of the Fishery Commissioners, they estimate the value of the anglings of Ireland at £100,000, while apparently they arrive at this sum on the basis of £7, 10s. a fish. We are nearly certain that the angling rents of Ireland, pure and simple, would hardly produce a tithe of £100,000, and to us it does not seem quite "according to Cocker" that the money supposed to be spent by anglers on tackle, wages, living, etc., should be included in a valuation of the angling. The Commissioners had such great opportunities of arriving at a pretty accurate estimate of what sum the total actual angling rental of the Irish rivers represented, that it would have been far more satisfactory to those interested had they given even an approximate amount of what the anglings themselves realised instead of lumping their value together with the unknown sums that anglers may or may not spend.

We doubt, indeed, if the united rents of the whole of the angling of all the rivers in Ireland would amount to £15,000, or that, in other words, they would exceed the rental derived from *only three* of the Scotch rivers, viz. the Aberdeen Dee, the Helmsdale, and the Tay. Yet there are more rivers in Ireland than in Scotland—rivers that are just as good, only that they lack protection. Especially do the smaller streams of the Irish west coast offer far

better opportunities for sport, owing to so many of them having lacustrine sources, than do the less numerous streams of the west coast of Scotland, which mostly run direct from the hills to the sea, and are almost dry as soon as the rain ceases.

It is remarkable that while the rod season on the Bann ends on the 30th of September, it is prolonged until the 31st of October on the tributaries of the Main and the Blackwater; for if the Bann fish are not fit to be caught after the end of September, then how much more unfit for food must the fish of its tributaries be just one month later!

With regard to the Blackwater, it is of but little use for angling; like the Main, it is a case of "has been." Also the weir at Benburb, ten miles up from Lough Neagh, has no fish pass in it, and thus cuts off many miles of fine spawning places.

Poor Bann! Never was there a river more suited to give large returns to legitimate netting, or to provide the best of sport for the rod. In all our experience we have never come across any river so unfortunate as this one. Others suffer from one or two, or perhaps even from several, of the evils already enumerated, but for the unhappy Bann there exists in their strongest form every conceivable evil that is deadly to salmon life. Amidst all these drawbacks it is cheering to know that in 1898 the Fishery Company put up a hatchery, at a cost of £1000, at Kilrea, which is capable of taking a million ova; and though there has been some difficulty in securing eggs enough to fully stock it, it has already been the means of turning out thousands of fry to the river, some of which, it is hoped, will eventually return as grilse. There is only one thing certain about the Bann, and that is, that

had it not been for the ceaseless efforts of Mr. R. L. Moore and the Bann Fishery Company, it would have become in a fair way to be wiped out as a salmon river. Even as it is, the future outlook is but a poor one.

County Antrim

THE BUSH,

said to derive its name from the fact of there having once been a large thorn bush growing close to where it wells from the side of a grouse hill in the Slievenanee Mountains, rises in the eastern centre of Antrim, and after a run of thirty-three and a half miles, in which it drains one hundred and thirty square miles of chiefly flat, boggy country, it falls into the sea at Bushmills, about twelve miles to the east of the mouth of the Bann, and between Ballintra and the Giant's Causeway.

Portrush Station is but five and a half miles from Bush mouth, while, as electric trams run from there to the Causeway, they will drop the angler at the river; so those who wish to fare sumptuously can work the Bush from the Northern Counties Hotel at Portrush, while for those disliking the daily trip, and not wanting quite so much luxury, there is a small inn adjoining the Bridge Pool at Bushmills that may be used.

With regard to the length of the Bush, we have put it down as given in the Hon. Granville Hely-Hutchinson's useful book, *Tables of Irish Rivers*, while all the maps we have consulted make out a course of about thirty-five miles. Mr. R. M. Douglas, however, who is Sir Francis Macnaghten's agent, and has known the district for thirty

BUSHMILLS BRIDGE AND HOTEL

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years, puts the course at but twenty-seven miles as the river flows, and eighteen as the crow flies, albeit the difference between the two eminent authorities is of really no importance except as an illustration of the old saying that "mistakes will occur," etc. Besides that, one of the two must be wrong; and if one of two such recognised authorities makes an error, then we think we may fairly hope that if a wandering stranger like ourself is at times a few miles out of his distances, or a day wrong in the rod close times of some of the small streams,—for in many cases the natives themselves do not know the close times of the rivers on whose banks they dwell,—then we shall be forgiven by our readers.

The Bush runs due north from its source in the hills until reaching Armoy, then, turning sharp to the west, it passes Dervock, where there is an inn, and then again it runs due north until it falls into the sea. Fish from the Bann are at times caught in the Bush, being easily recognised by their greater depth and thickness. There are no ticket waters or angling clubs on the river, for since about 1880 the rod fishing of the upper reaches, in the language of the schoolboy, has "gone to pot." For thirty years before that date it was perhaps the best in the United Kingdom, but now angling that formerly fetched £300 a season is nearly valueless, while, as further confirmation of the falling-off, it may be mentioned that in the season of 1900 only thirty-seven rod licences were taken out in the whole county of Antrim. In fact, all the rod fishing now worth mentioning is in the lower part of the river, from below the Leap down to the sea, a distance of some two and a half miles, in which there are twenty good casts, many of them requiring a brisk breeze from a northerly direction,

with a cloudy day, while plenty of rain is always desirable. Under these circumstances, good sport may still be had on this beat, for early in April of 1901 some friends of Lord Macnaghten, who is a brother of Sir Francis, had eight fish of from 9 lb. to 15 lb. in one day, while losing as many more. It carries three rods easily, Sir Francis always keeping one of them in his own hands, while letting the other two for a month or so. The river is open to the rod from the 1st of February to the 1st of October, the nets not commencing till the 16th of March, and coming off on the 20th of September, an unusually late date, specially conducive to the poaching and sale of fish from the neighbouring Bann, which closes on the 20th of August.

Nevertheless, Mr. R. M. Douglas would like to see netting allowed up till the end of September at the very least; either that or the weekly close time curtailed, for he says that at the end of every season there are double the quantity of fish in the river that are necessary, and that they interfere with each other when spawning. In favourable seasons fish run freely in March, and that month and the next one are the best for spring fish, which range from 10 lb. to 18 lb. From the 20th of June to the 1st of August is best for grilse, which average about 6 lb., and again August and September for sea trout, which, however, do not pass above the Leap. The Bush is one of the few Irish rivers that have been attacked by disease, which has now happily disappeared, though at one time it was so bad as to necessitate the removal of some hundreds of fish from the river for burial.

Sir Francis Macnaghten, the owner of the several fishery with the netting at the mouth, was one of the few who, when giving his evidence to the Commissioners,

THE LEAP

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stated the actual numbers of fish netted. At least, according to the Report, Sir Francis gave the total weights of the catches made in 1897 and two following years; while Mr. Douglas, on his behalf, gave the numbers of the fish. In 1897 only 1100 were got, which weighed 6734 lb.; 1898 gave 1082, weighing 6354 lb.; and then in 1899 there were more fish landed than in both preceding years, viz. 2626, totalling 15,651 lb.; while, as these 4808 fish show but an average of 6 lb., it is clear there must have been many grilse amongst them.

Sir Francis considered the protection of the Bush "good and ample," but inasmuch as he later on stated "that fish that get far up into the hills *never come back*," the preservation evidently still leaves something to be desired. Sir Francis speaks plaintively of the harm done by the flax water, and mentions a case in 1898 where 200 heavy spawning fish were killed at one discharge, and —of course the farmer was very sorry, but the mischief was done. No doubt it is a hard case for the farmer. He has flax dams; the water must go somewhere, and in the morning a labourer lets off the water to save himself the trouble of getting out the flax.

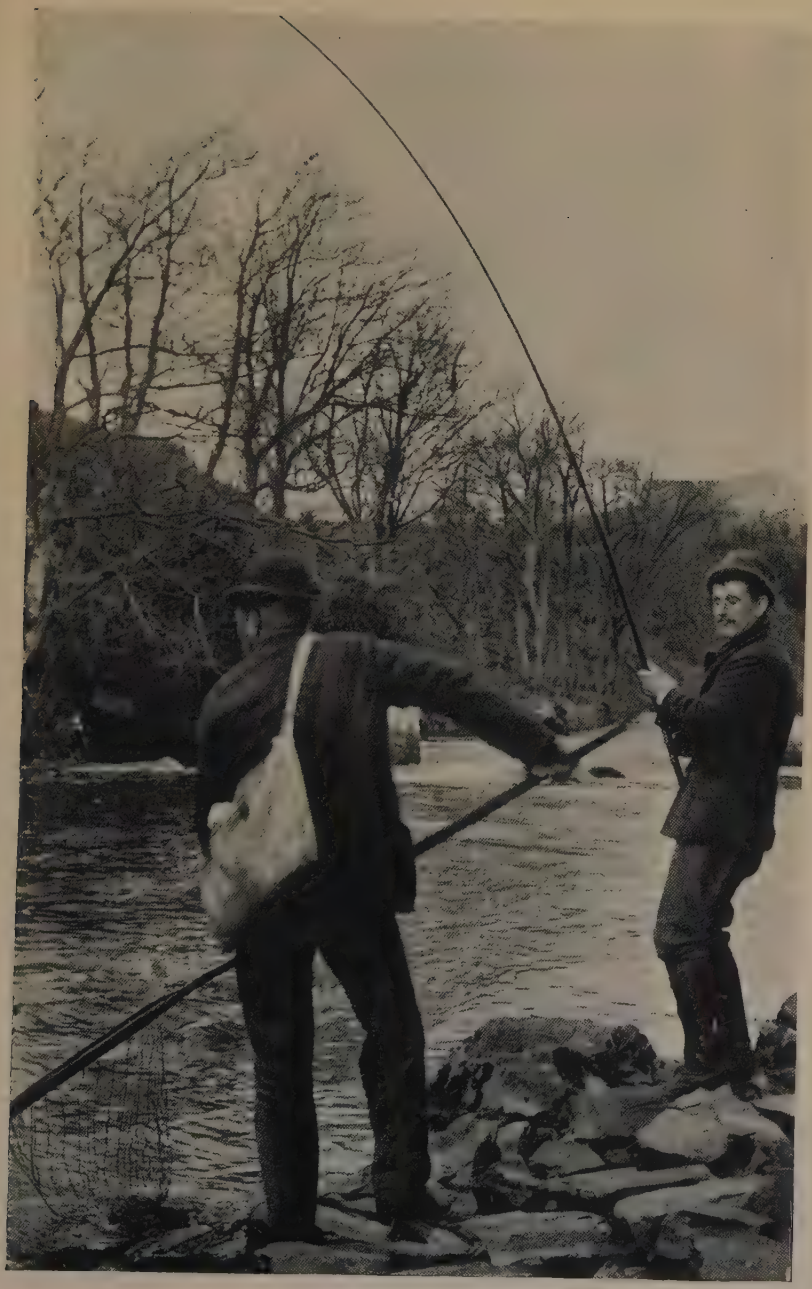
Clearly Sir Francis is a kind, large-hearted man, who looks at all sides of a question; for getting out the flax without first letting the water off entails wading in it thigh-deep—a very dirty, disagreeable business, hardly compensated for even by extra pay with whisky besides. Nevertheless, if the river is low, and a large quantity of flax water is sent into it, then for certain it is a death-warrant for all fish, great and small, for some distance below. If the river is high when the discharge comes, it only makes the fish sick, while injuring them for spawning and pre-

venting them from coming to a fly or any other lure. To this and to the better drainage carrying off the floods too quickly Sir Francis attributes the decline of the angling.

On the other hand, another proprietor, Dr. Traill of Ballylough House, Bushmills, who has established his right to the angling of some three miles of both banks lying just above Sir Francis Macnaghten's fishery, considers that his fishing is destroyed chiefly by the netting below, and where twenty years ago he took with the rod from fifty to seventy fish a season, he now does not get half a dozen.

Though fully recognising the evils that rapid drainage and flax water have brought to the angler, Dr. Traill complained to the Commissioners that the netting was not carried on legally. He inquires of them pertinently enough : " What is the use of having a weekly close time during which fish are allowed to get up during Saturday and Sunday, if they can be followed up with a boat and a net a mile up the river on Monday and taken out by the hundred ? To bring a boat on a cart up from the sea and put it into the pool and sweep it, and take the fish out wholesale that have been allowed to run up on Saturday and Sunday, is outrageous ! I have three miles of fishing on the river above, and taking the fish out like that leaves me with none."

Certainly this seems very hard lines on Dr. Traill, and moreover, we are strongly of opinion that it is illegal, even if the proprietors of the several fishery own the whole of the river above the Ballylough section. Dr. Traill also complained of a sort of wall built of loose stones at the top of the netting pool, which obstructed the passing up of the fish without stopping the water.



BELOW THE LEAP

Captain Kenneth MacNaghten and River Superintendent Doherty

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At times the mouth of the Bush is frequented by enormous shoals of coal fish, or "grey lords" as they call them locally, which appear as the fry begin to descend, and doubtlessly they exact a heavy toll of them; for those grey lords that have been caught and opened have all contained smolts, some as many as eight. It is indeed a pity that this river—one of the few that would yield good spring angling—should not be in a better plight, and that it has fallen off to such an extent as to be almost valueless. That drainage is the *only* cause seems to us doubtful, for every other river that flows through an agricultural country has suffered from the same thing, and in them, though the angling has depreciated, yet it has not been almost wiped out, as in the case of the Bush.

With reference to the stretch of water that in 1873 was let for £300—having regard to the great increase in the numbers of anglers since then, and the eagerness with which spring angling is competed for, and the high prices paid, if that section, which then fetched £300, were now in the market and offered sport like it did in 1873, then it would certainly fetch £600, and likely enough a great deal more. In addition to the Bush, there are some half-dozen smaller streams in Antrim all holding salmon and all suffering from flax water. Of these the Glenshark, the Glendun, and the Glenarm are perhaps the best.

There are no rules about the use of the gaff, but angling is expected to be carried on in a sportsmanlike manner, and if anyone repeatedly gaffed the kelts he hooked he would have but small chance of angling in the Bush again. Lures other than the fly are used occasionally, but their frequent use is not cared for by Sir Francis. The best

flies are the Judge, the Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales, the Assassin, the Old Soldier, and London Smoke; while all the Irish and Scotch standards also kill. The take, of course, varies very much with the weather. About seven years ago one rod had ninety-four fish from the 15th of February to the 7th of April, the same rod not getting forty in the season following, though there were quite as many fish.

Sea trout are best angled for with only one fly; Palmers, small Clarets, and Orange and Bustard are the favourites. A few of the takes of former days may be mentioned as showing what this river once was for the angler.

In 1873, in six weeks, from 15th June to 1st August, Mr. Adam McNeill took 444 fish,[1] of which twenty-two were taken one morning before breakfast; while in 1864 Colonel Grove had seventeen also before the morning meal; but we have not been able to find out at what time these two gentlemen sat down to table. About 1863, Mr. James Douglas, a brother of Mr. R. M. Douglas, landed thirty-one grilse out of the Bridge Pool in a day, while later on he killed seven grilse an hour for five consecutive hours—thirty-five in all. In 1882, on the 4th of May, one rod had eleven spring fish. In 1901, Samuel Doherty, the superintendent of the fishery, took thirty-three spring fish in April.

The late Sir Richard Sutton also had some astounding takes in the "forties," which are not mentioned, as we only have them from local talk, and not on "authority."

[1] So far as we have been able to ascertain, this take of 444 fish—no doubt chiefly grilse—in six weeks, by one rod, is the record for the United Kingdom.

1912.—It has now been proposed to allow rod fishing during the whole of October, and I believe I am right in saying this extension has become law—more's the pity, for it will only result in the capture of many spawning fish quite unfit for food and quite unable to put up a good fight for their lives. Indeed, if the rods are numerous in October, it will be surprising if the stock of spawners is not seriously affected.

THE COUNTIES OF LOUTH AND MEATH

THE DEE AND THE GLYDE.

THE BOYNE.

CHAPTER VI

The Counties of Louth and Meath

THE DEE AND THE GLYDE

We will now turn our backs on the north coast, and, leaving the district of flax water, chloride of lime, and desperate poaching, we will work to the south along the east coast.

After crossing the little Glenarm river, if the indentations of the coast be followed, there is a distance of fully one hundred miles, or sixty as the crow flies, before we again cross any stream that can be said to be a salmon river, and then the first two we do meet with are, worse luck, only melancholy examples of "have beens." These are the Glyde and the Dee, which, uniting about a mile from the sea, fall into Dundalk Bay, at Annagassan.

Each of these streams has a course of about thirty-five miles, while between them they drain upwards of three hundred square miles of country, so that it will be seen that they are both fair-sized streams. The first mile of the Glyde (the largest of the two waters) from the sea up is owned by Major-General Woolsey, while above, on the left bank, comes the two miles of the Castle Bellingham section, owned by Sir Henry Bellingham. When the river angling was worth speaking of, this stretch was the cream of it; but now netting at the mouth is greatly overdone, and pike

abound, while the moment a few fish do run up they are at once poached. This section, with the exception of two pools at the weirs, is all bank casting, easily worked by a sixteen-foot rod. Twenty years ago there was room for three rods, but now one rod is one too many!

Fish run in March and April, but nothing is done by the rod after the end of May, for grilse seem to have disappeared. In July and August large numbers of sea trout congregate at the lowest tidal weir, but those that pass up will not take any lure freely—a small "Blue Bottle" is the best chance, to which a few will sometimes rise. Lures of all sorts are permitted for salmon, of which the collie or stone loach is the best, if spun with a slow wobble. Flies must be of medium size, while any of the standard patterns will kill.

Twenty years ago sixty fish to one rod could be got by the end of April, but now five fish to three rods is about the average take! Also, in times gone by, fish were rarely below 16 lb., and ran up to 40 lb., but now they are got as small as 9 lb., while anything over 12 lb. is thought a good one. The best fish that has fallen to the rod in recent years was one of 32½ lb., taken four years ago by a cousin of Sir Henry Bellingham, Mr. W. B. Thornhill of Castle Cosey, which, being foul hooked by the tail, took nearly two hours to bring to the gaff.

The nets commence on the 12th of February, and come off on the 20th of August; the rods may begin on the 1st of February, while continuing to the 30th of September; but until the over-netting at the mouth, the incessant poaching, and the innumerable pike are done away with, the angling will never again be worth consideration, although with these evils removed, or at any rate lessened, it would once more become excellent.

THE BOYNE

rises in the neighbourhood of Edenderry, on the confines of King's County and Kildare, and, flowing northwards, it is shortly joined by the Yellow River, of sixteen miles in length. Then, at an interval, comes the Dale, of twenty-two miles, which drains Lough Lene and some smaller lakes, while farther north the Athboy, twenty-three miles, adds its waters, each of these streams falling in on the left bank of the main stream.

From the Athboy junction the Boyne becomes a big river, flowing through a pretty agricultural country for a further ten miles before it reaches Navan, where again on the left bank it is joined by the Blackwater, of forty-two miles, which also drains Lough Ramor.

Between this junction and Drogheda, a distance of about fifteen miles, lie the various celebrated rod fishings of the Boyne. With a course of seventy miles, and draining one thousand and forty square miles of country, while receiving the surplus waters of fifteen large tributaries, whose total length is two hundred and sixty miles, it is therefore not surprising to find that between Navan and Drogheda the river varies in width from sixty to one hundred yards, its banks in some places resembling those of the Tay above Perth, where it flows through the Scone and Battleby estates, although the Boyne is not nearly so rapid as the Scotch river.

Starting from Navan, above which there is no salmon angling worth speaking of, and working our way down stream, the various anglings come in the following order :—

1. The Upper Black Castle Water, of about a mile of both banks.

2. The Lower Black Castle Water, of about the same length.

3. Ardmulchan, about a mile, on the right bank.

4. Stackallen, on the left bank.

5. Beau Parc, on the right bank.

6. Slane Castle, on both banks.[1]

7. Rosnaree, about two miles of both banks.

8. Old Bridge.

The two Black Castle sections, belonging exclusively to Mr. R. R. FitzHerbert, are almost equally divided into upper and lower beats. If the owner happens to be at home in the spring, he usually keeps part of the fishing in his own hands; but if he happens to be abroad, then both waters are let. Sometimes an arrangement is made that the two tenants shall change beats on alternate weeks, though the more usual plan is for each occupant to fish the particular piece of water he has secured.

The upper water is certainly the very cream of the Boyne, and far better than the lower one, while throughout these two famous sections the pools are so close together that the angling is almost continuous.

In spite of the width of the river, no boats are wanted, the run of the various streams being always to one or other of the banks, so thus the throws can be fished dry-shod and waders dispensed with, except, indeed, in very low water, when they are used in a few of the pools.

Each of these sections will easily carry two rods, while

[1] From the Slane Castle water, in the spring of 1913, Sir Theodore Brinckman caught well over 100 fish (I think the exact number was 123), of 17 lb. average weight.

THE HUT STREAM. BLACK CASTLE UPPER WATER
River very low

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three, and at times even a fourth, can be out without clashing when fish are in plenty, with water and weather just right, *i.e.* when the river is at a good medium height, temperature mild and springlike, sky cloudy, with wind southerly.

The best of the pools on the upper water, which is now let on lease to Sir Francis Ley, Bart., Epperstone Manor, Nottingham, are Mill Sharp, Tunnel, Beech Tree, Hut, Narrows (north side), and Sclam, while there are fully half a dozen others.

On the lower water there are Long Sharp, Head of the Island, Old Bridge, and White Rock, with others. The gaff may be used from the opening day. The best flies are Jock Scot, the Blue Jock, the Claret, Lemon and Grey, and the late Major J. P. Traherne's noted killer, the Blue Boyne; while, as all these flies are standard patterns, it has not been thought necessary to describe them for the fly-tier. In the big water of the early season they can be used up to three inches in length, until in the low water of May they can hardly be too small. All other sorts of lures are used. In high or medium water, natural or artificial baits, the former for choice, are the best: the collie, the gudgeon, with the natural minnow, all having their votaries. The worm is also used, while up till the advent of April the baits account for the greater part of the catch.

The fly rod should be eighteen feet, with the bait rod about three feet less, while, on account of the width of the river and the size of the fish (which, by the way, are of very fine quality), the reel should hold fully one hundred and twenty yards of line.

There are no sea trout in the river, though formerly large numbers were got in the nets below Drogheda. In

the Black Castle waters the "brownies" run up to 6 lb., though they are very hard to catch.

Mr. FitzHerbert has recently turned out as an experiment a quantity of rainbows from his hatchery, which, when food is plentiful, quickly attain a large size, and we have read of a weight of 14 lb. being gained by a trout of only four years.

The river opens for nets and rods on the 12th of February, the former coming off on the 4th of August and the latter on the 15th of September. The rod, however, is not of very much use after the 1st of June, for, except in very wet seasons, the angling is over by the end of May. Salmon run heavy, and the first fifty that are got on the Black Castle waters sometimes will show the remarkable average of 20 lb., a weight which must ensure grand sport and many good fights, for as these first fifty will all be got by the end of March, it will be seen that such a catch will take some beating; while for weight, irrespective of numbers, there is hardly a river in the United Kingdom that can equal it. After the end of March this heavy average is seldom maintained, many of the April run of fish scaling only 11 lb. or 12 lb.

In the five years from 1880 to 1884 the take on the two Black Castle waters varied from between 450 fish up to 600. In the wonderful year of 1885 no fewer than 794 salmon were taken by the rods on the two Black Castle waters, of which 56 were killed in one day by four rods, and 199 of them in eight days; while we do not think that this total of 56 *spring* fish, taken in one day, with an average of 11 lb., by the four rods of the Messrs. FitzHerbert, from two miles of river, has ever been beaten in the United Kingdom. Also in those good times the Hon. Granville

THE HUT POOL. LOWER BLACK CASTLE

THE BOYNE FROM THE GARDENS OF SLANE CASTLE

[Face p. 132

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Hely-Hutchinson and his brother had 204 fish in a month. In 1886 the take was 450, of which 350 were killed in May. In 1887, a very dry year, only 120 were caught, and not one after the middle of April. In 1888 only 98 were brought to bank. In 1889 the total was 140. In 1890 it fell to 61; then from 1891 to 1895 the water was let on a five years' lease, and the take ranged from 60 to 100 each season. Thirty-one were landed in eight days in 1891. In 1893, 100 were got in the first five weeks, which averaged 20 lb. In 1896, from 12th to 18th February, 31 were caught, with a total of 130 for the season. In 1897 it was 200. The yield of 1898 was 236, and that of 1899 only 88. From this it will be seen that there have been no glorious seasons since 1887, and further on will be found the various reasons set forth to account for this great and steady decline. In addition to the Black Castle Water, Mr. FitzHerbert also owns the lower part of the River Blackwater, which he shares with Lord Essex.

The Upper Black Castle Water may be put down as giving 120 fish per season on the average, while the lower water has fallen to about 30, although in 1885 no less than 300 of the 794 fish caught in the whole Black Castle Water came from this beat.

Since 1894 Mr. FitzHerbert has had a large hatchery working at Black Castle, capable of taking two millions of ova, which, since its start, has turned out considerably more than two millions of trout and salmon fry, the benefits of which are already apparent in the fine stock of large trout, where a few years ago there were hardly any. Some fry hatched in 1895 from Rhine fish returned in 1900 as salmon, and were easily recognised from the Boyne fish by their being in better condition, and the golden hue of their scales.

A very curious thing also happened in the Moynalty tributary of the Blackwater, where, in 1897, when Mr. FitzHerbert was getting ova for his hatchery, in order not to catch the same fish again on the next day, he tied a piece of white tape to their tails, so that they might at once be recognised. Two years later, in 1899, when again similarly engaged, several of these fish were caught in about the same spot with the old tape still on their tails, although, on account of the intervening journeys to the sea, it had become so dirty as hardly to be noticeable.

Here are Sir Francis Ley's captures on Upper Black Castle—

1902	84 fish.	1908	107 fish.
1903	66 „	1909	101 „
1904	98 „	1910	65 „
1905	156 „	1911	148 „
1906	79 „	1912	116 „
1907	90 „		

Of the 1912 catch twenty-four were got on the south side of Lower Black Castle.

One of the proprietors of a well-known Boyne angling writes me: "I have not kept any records lately on my water, which has been getting worse from year to year!"

The Ardmulchan Water will carry two rods, and consists of about a mile of the right bank, all of it fishable dry-shod, the stream at Ardmulchan being the best on the beat. My old friend, Colonel Rocke, had this water for twelve years, luckily commencing his term in the great season of 1885. In 1886 he also did fairly well, but after that he did not get over sixty, or less than thirty, in any of the following ten seasons, while since 1897, when the Colonel gave up, even this average has not been maintained.

The Stackallen section is on the left bank, and joins

SLANE CASTLE

[Face p. 134

BROWNES PUBLIC [illegible]
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the top of the Slane Castle Water, which, after Upper Black Castle, is the next best reach on the Boyne, although some of the lower pools are netted where they are not suitable for the rod.

The Beau Parc Water, belonging to Major Lambert, is on the right bank below Ardmulchan, and carries two rods, all these three last-mentioned fishings being kept in the hands of their respective proprietors.

Commencing below Slane, and ending six miles above Drogheda, is the Rosnaree Water of Mr. C. W. Osborne, consisting of about two miles of both banks, all non-tidal water. This is also netted in places where angling is impracticable, and kept for the rod where the water is suitable. In 1885 the lessee of these nets had just 1000 fish as against 190 taken by the rods, or five to the nets for one to the rod, a very unusual matter, for the common thing is to find the nets getting twenty, thirty, or forty, and even more to the one of the rod. Then year by year netting and angling began to grow less, until in 1894 the take of these nets was only 103 fish, while in the ten years from 1890 to 1899 the average was 197—a paltry take, to which it would be absurd to attribute the decrease manifest in the whole of the rod fishings of the Boyne, for it is not to the ravages of the few nets working in the river that the unsatisfactory state of affairs must be put down, but wholly and solely to severe over-netting in the river between Drogheda and the sea. Mr. FitzHerbert and the other proprietors have no doubt on this subject (and it is difficult to see how any unbiased person can come to any other conclusion), for a unique state of netting anarchy reigns supreme in the waters below Drogheda down to the bar.

Fifty, or perhaps sixty, years ago the Corporation of

Drogheda owned the whole of this water, but the "duffers" —we can call them nothing milder—who then ruled the doings of the Corporation failed to assert their claim for so many years that eventually this part of the Boyne lapsed into a common or public fishery, which anyone could net who paid for a licence. About forty years ago there were only five nets working in this water—not draft-nets, of many yards in length, but comparatively harmless snap-nets. As the fish increased the nets increased, until in 1896 there were over one hundred draft-nets working in this water, many of them paying no heed to the weekly close time; and though in 1899 there had been a decrease of about twenty, that arose only from a scarcity of fish. Therefore, as long as the number of these nets is not limited by law, for so long must the Boyne anglings remain as they are, or grow poorer and poorer year by year. As Mr. FitzHerbert said to the Fishery Commissioners, "As the fish increased the nets increased; and then, when the nets increased, the fish decreased." Thus matters are at a deadlock, and the only hope is that Government will step in and take over this fishery, and place a limit on the number of the nets.

If the angling proprietors of the Boyne only knew exactly what number of nets they had to contend against, they would accept the situation and try by means of hatcheries and by better protection to provide salmon for a fixed number of nets, while making certain of a surplus for sport; but as long as they know that any increase in the fish will promptly be met by an increase in the nets, they have no other course open to them than to submit to the inevitable. To expect any one proprietor to fight this matter single-handed would be manifestly unfair, but we

cannot help thinking, if one and all would combine to take the matter before the proper authorities, that then they would get the relief to which without doubt they are entitled. That such an end to this happy-go-lucky, first-come-first-served style of netting may eventually be arrived at is greatly to be wished for in the interests of "Pat," the proprietors, the anglers, and the fish.

There is also one other evil to which the Boyne fish are subject, and that is that in the Dundalk Fishery District, lying to the north of the mouth of the river, the sea nets continue to work for just a whole month after the Boyne District nets have been withdrawn by law, and thus these nets are permitted to kill great quantities of fish that would otherwise ascend the Boyne.

CHAPTER VII

Some Remarks on the 1901 Report of the Irish Inland Fishery Commission

It has always seemed to us as if the Irish authorities did not sufficiently realise not only what large sums are kept out of the pockets of the angling proprietors by the poorness of their rod fishings, but also that they have not fully grasped the still larger sums that are put into circulation by anglers in pursuing their sport. As a sort of standard on which to base a calculation of what these sums might amount to, we will take a mile of both banks of any of the big Irish spring rivers, all of which should easily be capable of yielding an average of thirty to fifty fish of 15 lb. each season from the opening day to the end of April, or, for convenience of calculation, let us say for a period of ten weeks. We are speaking of rivers such as the Bann, Bush, Boyne, Blackwater, Lee, Shannon, Slaney, Suir, Barrow, and Nore. Taking one with the other, it is certainly a moderate estimate if it be put down that each of these rivers will show an average of ten miles of good angling water, or one hundred miles for the ten rivers; for, as their united length is eight hundred and seventy miles, the supposition that each on an average could show ten miles of angling is surely not an extravagant one. As rents run nowadays, each of these miles, on the basis of thirty to

fifty fish in ten weeks, would let for an average sum of £150.[1] Each mile shall be fished by two rods, employing two ghillies at 21s. a week, or £21 for the ten weeks. The hotel bill of the two anglers will come to £40 a month for each, inclusive of a car to take them to and from the water each day, together with lunch and whisky for the two ghillies. We will say that each angler spends £5 with Irish tacklemakers, that each spends £3 on travelling in Ireland, each shall give his ghillie a tip of 40s. at the end of the angling (always supposing it has been deserved), and each shall spend other £5 in sundries. Then we have an account as under :—

	£	s.	d.
One hundred miles of angling, let at £150 a mile .	15,000	0	0
Estimate of expenditure of two anglers on one mile—			
Two ghillies at 21s. a week for ten weeks .	21	0	0
Hotel bill, £10 a week for each for ten weeks .	200	0	0
Each spends £5 in tackle in Ireland . .	10	0	0
Each spends £3 in travelling in Ireland . .	6	0	0
Each tips his ghillie 40s. . . .	4	0	0
Each spends £5 in sundries . . .	10	0	0
Expenditure of two anglers on one mile for ten weeks	251	0	0
£251 per mile on one hundred miles . . .	25,100	0	0
Received by proprietors	15,000	0	0
Received by the working bees of the neighbourhood	25,100	0	0
Total	40,100	0	0

Now, suppose that by amended laws and better protection, and by the aid of hatcheries, the rod takes on each of these miles could be increased from an average take of thirty to fifty fish to one of eighty to one hundred fish, then, though the anglers' expenditure in pursuit of their

[1] This rent is supposed to include the angling right of both banks.

sport would remain the same, the rent of each mile could be raised from £150 to £350, which would give the respectable sum of £35,000 for distribution amongst the proprietors. Of course, in the event of the owner of the angling keeping it in his own hands, all that he would gain would be increased sport; but those who are rich enough to be able to do that would be the first to recognise the benefits they had received.

The chief trouble with the bulk of the Irish river proprietors is the want of funds to protect their property.

1. Now, if the Government gave them a "leg up," and helped them where help is most urgently needed, in the matter of protection, by ordering the constabulary and coastguard to protect fish during the close times;

2. If the drift-nets were abolished, and the coastguard and police were ordered to see that the close times for other nets were duly observed;

3. If the rod season was curtailed, especially in those rivers which now keep open after the end of September—then in a few years the angling rents could be increased three or four fold, when, as soon as that satisfactory state of affairs had been reached, every proprietor should be called on, as previously agreed, to contribute a portion of his increased rent to the reduction of the Government expenditure on the matter; for before affording relief, the Government should come to an agreement with the proprietors to the effect that any increase on the amount of the old rental should be by law liable to a certain fixed tax after the date of the receipt of Government assistance.

If something of this sort was done, then the netting and the angling of the Irish rivers would soon recover from the ceaseless attacks of the dominant devilments of over-netting combined with hard poaching, and that such a

happy consummation may some day be arrived at is devoutly to be prayed for in the interests of all concerned.

With regard to the increasing number of drift-nets, the Irish Fishery Commissioners of 1901 accept the fact with equanimity, and do not appear to realise how destructive they are, or to note what havoc they have brought to all other nets, and to all rivers, near where they have appeared. This is the more remarkable as in the 1900 Report of the Scotch Salmon Fisheries these nets are loudly complained of and spoken against, while in 1901 they were declared illegal and abolished. As it is indeed difficult to see how any system of netting that was bad for Scotch rivers and Scotch fish can be good for Irish ones, it is greatly to be desired that the drift-nets of the Irish coasts should share the fate of those that used to operate so disastrously on the Scotch shores. These nets are from three hundred to twelve hundred yards in length. The fish are caught by running their heads through the mesh, and are hung by the gills. They are the most destructive and wasteful nets ever invented, not only from the killing power afforded by their great length, but from the fact that they kill alike clean fish and kelts; moreover, they are wasteful to a degree, inasmuch as many fish become disentangled and sink to the bottom of the sea, while those that are brought into the boat are blown up to an unnatural size by having been hanged for hours and left dead in the water, and are just as much unfit for food as any drowned or strangled animal.

Also, in our humble opinion, it is unfair that the cost of a licence for a drift-net should only be £3, while the same sum is paid for a draft-net of about one hundred yards; therefore, either the draft-net is overcharged or the drift-net is undercharged, and until they are abolished

we think every drift-net should pay a 20s. licence for every hundred yards; and though, of course, the owners would cry out, we are quite certain such a tax would not prevent any of them from continuing to work, for the profits made by a drift-net would stand a much heavier charge than the one suggested. With all due deference, we do not agree with the recommendations of the Irish Fishery Commissioners in the matter of sea nets. They say—

"It is obvious that the capture of salmon and trout in the open sea does not interfere with the free passage of such fish to the upper waters in the same degree as their capture in the narrow reaches of estuaries, or by netting in the fresh-water portions of rivers. Fishing for salmon and trout on the seacoast, or in the open sea, is an industry followed, as a rule, by fishermen of the poorer class; and if the weekly and annual close seasons were observed, or their observance enforced by more efficient protection, we do not think that the fishing in the open sea calls for any further restrictions on its use."

How the capture of a salmon in the open sea can be said not to interfere with its free passage to fresh water so much as would be the case if it was captured close to the mouth of the river it was about to ascend is an argument we are unable to follow; for every salmon must come to fresh water, and the effect of its capture, so far as the supply of fish is concerned, must be exactly the same, whether it be effected fifty miles from the river mouth or made within a short distance of fresh water: in either case it is a salmon the less.

It might just as well be argued, in the case of a man who was returning to his wife from a distance, that it would be less cruel to hit him on the head when he was fifty miles

from home than to kill him when but fifty yards from his doorstep.

Our contention is that draft-nets, legally worked in the estuaries, are not nearly so destructive as the sea nets. They are seldom over one hundred yards in length, while from their proximity to public view it can easily be seen that their operations are lawfully conducted. There is no comparison between the destructive power of a legally worked draft-net of one hundred yards and that of an illegally worked drift-net of twelve hundred yards. Moreover, wherever these drift-nets have appeared they have never failed to injure the fisheries adjacent to their operations, which had previously been flourishing before their advent.

For these reasons, then, we disagree with the proposition that netting in the open sea calls for no restriction, for it is these very sea nets that have to a great extent caused the decline of our salmon fisheries.

There can be no permanent increase in the numbers of the fish unless, in the interest of the public, the law steps in to abolish the drift-nets, while placing at the same time a hard-and-fast limit on the numbers of the others.

What is the use of spending extra sums on the better preservation of the spawning beds?—what is the good of petitioning the Government to permit the constabulary and the coastguard to help?—what is to be gained by clamouring for State-aided hatcheries, if every increase in the numbers of the fish is met by a corresponding increase in the engines of destruction?

Suppose that at present a river gives 5000 fish to a certain fixed number of coast and estuary nets. What good will it be to the riparian owners of the rivers of the

district if they, by better preservation of the river and a larger expenditure, eventually make the coasts yield 10,000 fish, the whole of which will be caught as grilse, when they seek to return to the rivers, by double the number of nets that had previously worked these coasts and estuaries? The result is that the river will remain in the state that it was before the proprietors increased their expenditure, while the sea nets will have reaped all the benefits! The proprietors naturally become disgusted at such a state of affairs, and, withdrawing their outlay, they retire from the unfair struggle in disgust.

Now, supposing that before the owners made their efforts to improve their rivers it had been decreed by law that the adjacent estuaries with their coasts should only be fished by a fixed number of nets, then the river owners would have known what they had to fight against, and they would have been sure that a good portion of the extra 5000 grilse they had produced would return to their rivers; for with a limit on the number of sea nets a great many fish would escape being caught, for they could not get them all. Thus, year by year, the rivers would be re-stocked and built up again until each had reached its maximum power of production.

Here is the plaintive lament of one of the best protectors of Irish salmon fisheries. Says he: "Since 1902 the drift-nets have been steadily increasing in both number and length on the north and north-west coasts of Ireland." These nets are supplied and financed by the Fish Salesmen of Billingsgate, who, under the cloak of helping the poverty-stricken Irish fishermen, only give them a very small percentage of the profits while pocketing the bulk of it themselves. These drift-nets not only catch the lion's share

to such an extent that there are every season appallingly less salmon going up the rivers to spawn, but in this winter of 1912 they have so far displenished the stock that we cannot get sufficient spawners to fill even one part of our hatchery with eggs. The late Royal Commission for the Irish Inland Fisheries might just as well not have taken place so far as these drift-nets are concerned, for that Commission did recommend that the numbers and the length of the drift-nets should be decidedly decreased—a sensible suggestion, which the Irish Fishery Inspectors have totally ignored ! I should indeed like to have some explanation as to why the Lord Chancellor prohibited the use of drift-nets in Scotland while sanctioning their use in Ireland ? Of course, our angling, like all the others, has fallen off badly, and must infallibly go even further to the bad."

We have also been greatly astonished at the very large number of water bailiffs employed in Ireland as compared with Scotland. The numbers are out of all proportion to the results gained; for although poaching is not quite so rampant as it would be if there were no bailiffs, it is still quite common and a crying evil, as evidenced in the reports published in the Blue Book of the 1901 Irish Fishery Commissioners. Here are the numbers of the water bailiffs employed on some of the rivers dealt with in this volume :—

	Bailiffs.
Ballisodare River	43
Bann River	44
Bush River	23
Bangor, Erris District (five streams and some minor ones)	96
Erne District (two thousand one hundred and sixty-seven square miles)	173
Foyle and Londonderry District (one thousand five hundred and sixty-two square miles)	300

	Bailiffs.
Galway and Lough Corrib Districts (one thousand two hundred and eleven square miles)	107
Letterkenny District (fourteen streams)	141
Moy District (one thousand and twenty-four square miles)	400

or a total of 1420 men.

The Tay, which is the largest of the Scotch rivers, with a catchment basin of two thousand five hundred and ten square miles, is guarded by but twenty water bailiffs, who obtain about sixty convictions each season. The Spey, draining one thousand and seventy-nine square miles, has forty-six protectors; while the Aberdeen Dee, with eight hundred and twenty-four square miles, needs but twenty-three, who obtain about thirty-five convictions per season.

Here, then, we have a total of eighty-nine bailiffs employed on three of the largest of the Scotch rivers, as against eight hundred and seventy-three employed on three of the largest Irish rivers—viz. the Moy, Foyle, and Erne. Clearly there must be something radically wrong in the system of Irish protection.

We have already more than once alluded to the very small wages paid to the fish protectors of Ireland and to the improbability of their arresting their relations or friends. It is quite certain that far better results would be obtained by employing one-fifth of the number, who were properly paid and who were strangers to the district. It also seems to us a moot point as to whether the conservators of large rivers which have many tributaries would not be wiser to concentrate their watching staff on some of the favourite spawning grounds, and leave the others to their fate; for by this they would ensure absolute protection to a great many pairs of fish, which in the end might be more beneficial than trying to preserve a larger extent of water with an

inefficient staff, many of whom would stand in with the poachers. Also it seems feasible, if concentrated protection were tried, that fish should be netted in the main stream above the entrance of the tributary selected for special preservation, and then transferred by cart or by boat some miles up it and turned into it to stay and spawn. The more fish that could be placed in reason in a stream on which concentrated protection was to be used, so much the better for the fishery owners and so much the worse for the poachers. A large tributary will easily hold two thousand spawning beds, and it would be better, we think, to ensure perfect protection to six thousand beds than to partially protect double that number at the beginning of the spawning season, but widely distributed over the whole of many tributaries, and then to find hardly a fish left by the end of it.

As an example of how severe this poaching is in some of the wild, out-of-the-way parts of Ireland, and as showing what a farce is the protection given to the fish by the wretchedly-paid native bailiffs, we will tell how in the course of our travels we happened to see an announcement in a local journal to the effect that the fishery conservators of the district were pleased to be able to report that there had been no increase in poaching during the last spawning season. The day following we mentioned this as a hopeful sign to the owner of the upper waters of the chief river of the district, who was very kindly taking us a personally conducted tour of the fishery. His answer was : " Increase of poaching indeed ! How could that be possible when round about here every man, woman, and child is already a poacher ? Only an influx of poaching strangers could make matters worse than they are ! "

Singular to relate, there is one form of poaching that is rife on the west coast of Scotland which is not much practised in Ireland. We allude to the scringing of the estuaries and the mouths of the rivers. In the Reports of the Scotch Fishery Board constant mention is made of this form of poaching on the west coast, and the difficulty that exists of suppressing it. In the Report of the Irish Commissioners there is no mention made of poaching by this means so far as any of the rivers dealt with in this volume are concerned. The probable explanation of this remarkable abstinence, we think, may be found in the fact that every scringer robs the legal netter; that no local crew can work the scringe-net without its being known; and that, as there are many more netters on a small scale on the west coasts of Ireland than on the Scotch ones, it is probable that as soon as these men saw that the scringers would rob them, they simply took their protection in their own hands, and warned off the scringers with threats of violence.

The question of the rod licence in Ireland has always been the cause of a certain amount of friction between the tourist angler and the district conservators. It can be taken out in any district, and then covers the whole of Ireland. Nevertheless, it is open to those who own private fisheries to say that anglers may fish in them only on condition that they take out a licence in their district, for the money goes to the funds of the district conservators, and hence the pressure that is put on the angler. In the long-run this does more harm than good, as it deters anglers from travelling.

There are twenty-three districts in Ireland, and thus anyone making an angling tour round the island might be

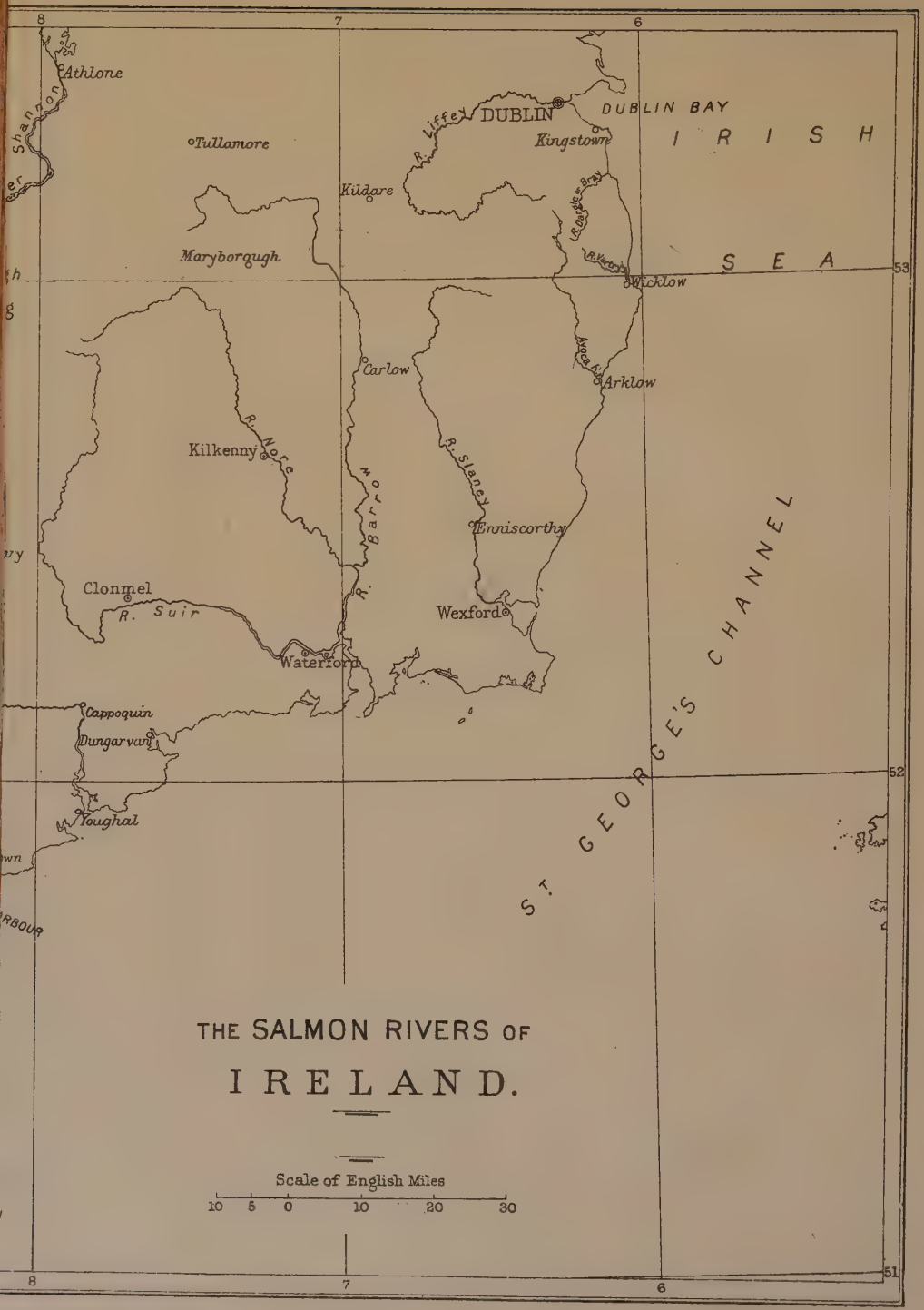
called on to spend £23 in rod licences, which would indeed be hard on the angler. On the other hand, the fisher who makes up his mind to put in a long stay at one place, or in one district, will pay his pound cheerfully, for it is only fair that the funds of the district should be helped in this manner. A liberal-minded angler will not grumble, even if he only fishes for a fortnight for his pound, although the expenditure of the same amount will permit the native of the district to fish for the whole of the open season. Take, however, the case of an angler arriving at Ballyshannon for a long stay. After a time he might wish to go to Ballina for just one day on the Moy, or to Gweedore for a cast on the Claudy, or he might do both; but if he did he would have to pay 40s. for his two days' angling, which would fairly entitle him to a growl. The Commissioners of 1901 make an excellent suggestion in their report, which it is to be hoped will be adopted forthwith, as it would do away with any feelings of hard lines. They advise: "As regards the rod licence for salmon fishing, we think that it should be taken out and paid for in the district in which it is first used, and that whenever the holder of a salmon licence goes to fish outside that district, he should pay to the conservators of each new district into which he moves an additional duty of twenty-five per cent."

We are not sure whether it would not be easier to meet the difficulty by the issue of two kinds of rod licences, keeping one as at present, and calling the other a travelling or tourist licence, and charging 30s. for it, this licence to be taken out where it is first used, the district retaining 20s. and remitting 10s. to Dublin, to be dealt with according to the number of districts in which the holder might fish,

his movements being traced by his signature in a book kept for the purpose by the head bailiff on each river. At the end of the season the 10s. could be divided between the districts angled in. This would save the angler the trouble of having to find out the official to whom he ought to pay the extra 5s. whenever he passed from one district into another. The chances are that very few would angle in more than three districts; but if he paid 30s. for a travelling licence, and did fish in three districts, then his payment would be exactly the same as if the suggestion of the Commissioners had been made law. Also many anglers would not fish in more than two districts, and then the adoption of the travelling licence would gain 5s. for the fund. The few who angled in more than three districts would of course reduce the amount each district would have to receive, but the angler who fished more than three districts would spend so much amongst the natives and in journeying from place to place that he ought to be encouraged in every possible way.

We have now come to the end of our tether, as far as the first part of the book is concerned. In the next part, which deals with the rivers lying to the south of a line drawn between Dublin and Galway, we shall have something to say with regard to the estimate made by the Commissioners of the value of the anglings of Ireland, of the annual close times, and of " the suggestions " made by the Commissioners in their report.

London: Kegan Paul



THE SALMON RIVERS OF IRELAND.

Scale of English Miles

10 5 0 10 20 30

Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd.

CHAPTER VIII

County Dublin

THE LIFFEY

The first portion of this book having taken us from the Galway river to the Boyne and the historical old town of Drogheda, but an hour by rail from Dublin and the Liffey, hither we will now make our way for a brief stay, while when resuming our travels we will work down the coast to Wexford, and from there skirting the whole of the seaboard of the south, as Cape Clear is neared we will turn northwards to follow the west coast until we are again in sight of Galway Bay, thus completing the entire circuit of the island. Of course Dublin must not be quitted without a few words about the Liffey—a fine stream in which there are in places many pretty casts such as delight the heart of the angler. This river, which rises but some dozen miles to the south of Dublin, in County Wicklow, has such a tortuous course that it runs for eighty-two miles, chiefly through Wicklow and Kildare, ere it falls into Dublin Bay. It is well known to thousands of our soldiers who have been quartered at Newbridge or the Curragh. In 1864 we were quartered in the last-named camp, when it was a wondrous sight to see the army of officers and men that turned out on the banks of the Liffey as opportunity offered. The stream was literally flogged

to death, which, however, did not greatly matter, for as long as the water was fit for the use of the fly we never saw a trout caught. Their education had been perfected! It was only when rain discoloured the river that a basket could be filled by the use of baits, while also when fishing by night we made some really good takes of from two to three dozen, averaging fully 1 lb. each.

In those days the natives used to tell us stories of salmon that had been seen in the river at Newbridge, although during the four months we fished it we never saw one. The best salmon reaches are lower down the river, between Maynooth and Lucan, with its weir and mineral springs, but owing to the want of passes in the seven or eight weirs, fish can only ascend at the rare intervals when the water is exactly at a right height for a successful leap, and thus there are very few fish about these pretty reaches, while higher up the river the fall at Poulhapouca entirely hinders them from reaching the upper waters. Round Liffey mouth there is a great deal of poaching in the sea, while also the lawful nets do not observe the weekly close times. At one period, not very long ago, there used to be between forty to fifty licensed draft-nets working about the mouth, but, owing to the increasing scarcity of fish, in 1900 their number had been reduced to six!

The netting of the river at Island Bridge belongs to the Corporation of Dublin, who let it or "sets" it, as it is called in some parts of Ireland. When the river is small, the lessee, except in the weekly close time, can stop every fish, and it is only with a Saturday or Sunday flood that they can ascend, for in times of low water as many as sixty fish have been got in the first haul of the net at 6 a.m. on Monday. The mere fact, however, of fish being there

makes it quite plain that the pollutions so freely emptied into the Liffey by the inhabitants of Dublin have not as yet made its waters—dirty as they look, malodorous as they are—unliveable for salmon. Then, whenever a few fish do get past these Island Bridge nets, they are hard poached in the dams and weirs by the mill hands, for the river is practically without protection.

Want of funds is the cry of the Dublin Conservators—the universal cry coming from every fishery district in Ireland ; but that it should come doubly emphasised from such a rich district is indeed remarkable. That salmon angling, which undoubtedly could be made really good by a not very extravagant outlay, should be allowed to quietly dwindle to nothing and " go to pot " when situated within a few miles of the Irish capital, solely for want of funds, is a reproach to the angling descendants of St. Patrick. Dublin boasts 350,000 inhabitants. What would such angling as might be offered by the Liffey be worth if it was just outside a big town in England, with only a quarter of the population ?

The slender funds of the conservators are derived entirely from about twenty net licences at £3 each, with some hundred salmon rod licences at £1 each; and if it were not for the income derived from this last-named source, matters financial would indeed be at a low ebb with them, while, even as it is, their total funds in 1900 amounted only to £120.

The reader must not, however, think that because there are about one hundred rod licences taken out each year in Dublin, that therefore the district abounds with salmon fishers, for the greater part are taken out by innocent anglers, coming chiefly from England, under the impression

that they are available all over Ireland, and who are not aware that on nearly all the ticket anglings the owners make it a stipulation that tickets will not be issued to anglers unless they have a licence taken out in the particular district in which the angling is situated.[1]

The Liffey opens for nets and rods on the 1st of February, the former coming off on the 15th of August and the latter on the 31st of October. The fish, which average 14 lb., do not begin to run much before May, with the grilse following in June, and scaling 6 lb. From the foregoing it will be seen that in the present state of affairs this is not a river worthy of the close attention of the salmon angler, but rather one on which just to put away a day or two if the chance presents itself on one of the picked reaches.

We will now turn our backs on the Liffey and journey to Bray, making a short halt at that pretty watering-place to take a hasty glance at the Dargle or Bray River, famed for its ravine and the beauties of the Powerscourt domain. This is quite a small river, of some twelve miles in length, the Earl of Meath owning the mile nearest the sea, which he nets for his table and his friends, taking only from twenty to sixty fish a season; he also owns a several fishery in the sea, which extends for half a mile on each side of the river mouth. This is let and worked by draft-nets, having the same close times as the Liffey. Salmon are no longer caught by the rod, while even under the most favourable circumstances not more than two or three sea trout would be expected, and therefore anglers who are bent on catching *salmonidæ* must not make Bray their headquarters, however tempting all other surroundings

[1] See remarks on rod licences, p. 149.

THE AVOCA AT ARKLOW

THE SLANEY AT ENNISCORTHY

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may be. Continuing our journey down the coast, we cross the small Varty River just before reaching Wicklow, where, however, once more it is hardly worth while to halt for angling. Proceeding to Arklow, we cross the Avoca, sacred to the memory of Tom Moore and a few salmon that formerly used to be in the river. Our next halt shall be made at Enniscorthy on the Slaney River, where, if permission be got in March, April, and May, the angler will not be long ere he has a tight line; for the angling, being pretty good, is nearly all in the hands of the owners or let to gentlemen.

The Slaney, which rises in the Table Mount of Wicklow, has a course of seventy-five miles, in which it drains six hundred and eighty square miles of country while receiving over a hundred miles of large tributaries, besides many little streams, which total up to something approaching two hundred and fifty miles, the whole of which have to be protected at an outlay, as far as the conservators are concerned, of the small sum of £380, that being about the total amount of the available funds. In 1898, £53 of this was spent in prosecutions, the fines amounting to but £8, 16s., while, as this is the average annual expenditure under this head, it will be seen how little is left for the payment of efficient water-bailiffs. The Slaney has a rocky bed, and is somewhat of a mountain river in the upper part, with sharp streams and deep pools, and free from all pollution. Its misfortune is that, like the Boyne, the tidal water and estuary from a little above Enniscorthy to Wexford, a distance of twenty miles, is subject to a public netting right, so that anyone who pays £3 for a licence can put a boat on it.

In the case of the Boyne, it has been shown that the

public acquired the right by the neglect of Drogheda Corporations, in years gone by; how the public gained this right of netting on the tidal water of the Slaney we have not been able to ascertain, but presumably through the carelessness of some former riparian owners. However, there it is, and these nets are the absolute masters of the salmon supply of the upper waters, for there is proof positive that as they increased the fish decreased.

In 1871 there were many more fish, both for nets and rods; but in those days, of the former there were but forty-two at work, whereas in 1892 there were eighty-five; and though from that period the numbers have slightly gone down, owing to the scarcity of fish, there are yet about seventy-five at work. Although they observe the close times fairly well, any kelts they may mesh are never returned to the river, and there is trustworthy evidence to the effect that in one week an Enniscorthy fishmonger sold between 200 and 300 kelts, all bought from the men working these nets.

It takes three men to each boat, who, to make a fair profit during the season, should catch 200 salmon and grilse, which, if made by eighty boats, would give 16,000 fish as the take of the public nets; and though it may not be quite that, there is no doubt they capture from 12,000 to 15,000 fish each season; and that the business is a paying one is proved by the number of licences issued.

The netters complain loudly of the decreasing yield, placing all the blame on bad protection, the too early opening of the river to the rod, and the many kelts captured by native anglers on the free water between Enniscorthy and Ballycarney. Naturally enough, they ridicule the idea of their own nets being the greatest sinners!

Salmon average about 12 lb., but are often got of double that weight, and even more. The chief run begins at the end of March or first week in April, and continues to the end of May, while in June the angling may be said to end. The rods begin on the 26th of February, continuing to the 31st of August; the nets commence on the 11th of April, and work till the 15th of September: the only instance, we think, in the United Kingdom where the rods cease before the nets do.

Surely there must be something altogether wrong in this law, for if on the 1st of September fish are not fit to be taken by the rod in the fresh water immediately above the tide, how much more out of condition must they be if netted for a fortnight later close to where it has been decreed that they have been unfit for food for the previous fortnight?

It is also worthy of note with regard to the Slaney, and a matter to rejoice over, that the authorities, after watching for a few years the destructive powers of half a dozen drift-nets working in the estuary, declared them illegal and abolished them—a sound policy of nipping an evil in the bud, which it is to be hoped may be imitated in other quarters. Another drawback both to the angling and the preservation is the multiplicity of the proprietors who own short distances of one bank only.

Perhaps the best angling parts of the Slaney are from Clohamon to above Newtownbarry. These are owned by Mr. R. W. Hall Dare of Newtownbarry House, and East Hall, Wennington, Essex.

The lower water, from Newtownbarry Bridge down to Clohamon Weir, is usually let, the owner being fortunate in having the late General Pottinger as a tenant, for he

was not only all that a sportsman should be, but had devoted much of his time and vigorous good sense to the making of strenuous efforts to bring about a resuscitation of the salmon. The General had the water from Newtownbarry Bridge down to Clohamon Weir for several seasons, a distance of one and a half miles, which includes about half a mile of both banks. In 1898 he got twenty-six fish; in 1899 two fish only; in 1900 six fish; in 1901 fifteen fish—the largest scaling 24 lb., the average weight being 10 lb.

Above Newtownbarry Bridge Mr. Hall Dare keeps the angling in his own hands—a fine stretch of water, if well stocked with fish; but here, like everywhere else, there has been a gradual decline, descending from 150 fish in 1887 to fifty-five in 1900.

Here are the catches made on Mr. Hall Dare's part of his Newtownbarry water which he keeps in his own hands:—

1907	78 fish.	
1908	64 ,,	
1909	99 ,,	
1910	80 ,,	
1911	46 ,,	to 10th May.
1912	29 ,,	,,

The season of 1912 has been the worst for many years.

Up to 1900 the rod fishing was distinctly very poor. Then the netting season having been curtailed by ten days, from 1st to 10th April, the proprietors were encouraged to spend more money on preservation, with the happiest results.

Mr. Hall Dare lets the rest of his angling—some four miles from Newtownbarry down to Ballyrankin—to Colonel Reginald Barclay, who rents also Ballina Park Water.

THE SLANEY AT NEWTOWNBARRY

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From him I learn that his catches have been as follows :—

1903	71 fish.	1908	92 fish.
1904	80 „	1909	80 „
1905	166 „	1910	99 „
1906	82 „	1911	112 „
1907	54 „	1912	26 „

In 1912 the netters appealed against the alteration of their close time, and success having attended their efforts, the nets are now to be plied again from 1st April. It is much to be feared this will ruin the angling and reduce it to what it was prior to 1900.

Formerly grilse and sea trout used to give excellent sport on these waters, but now there are next to none, their disappearance coinciding with a reduction made some years ago in the size of the mesh of the estuary nets.

Mr. Hall Dare, who takes the greatest interest in the river, has spared neither trouble nor expense in his efforts to improve it. All the kelts landed in his fisheries are now marked, while he further maintains a private hatchery capable of taking 200,000 ova, which has been very successfully worked, so far as turning fry into the river is concerned. But what is the good of anyone trying to increase the stock of salmon in his river so long as there is no limit placed on the number of the nets that work in the estuary ?

Supposing that by better protection aided by hatcheries 5000 more fish could be brought to the mouth of a river where there is a public right, then as soon as the existing nets were noticed to be doing well, twenty or thirty fresh ones would start, and the new stock of fish would be wiped out.

It seems to us that in all cases of public netting rights

the management and control of them should be vested in some governing body, who should, in the interests of the public and the riparian proprietors, place a limit on the number of licences to be issued.

In the case of the Slaney, it has been pretty clearly shown that seventy-five nets are more than the river will fairly stand. Now, supposing that their number was fixed at sixty-five, then the upper proprietors would know the worst they had to face, and they could set to work with the assurance that if they managed to increase the stock of fish, that then, although the sixty-five nets would get a large part of the new stock returning as grilse, yet they would not be able to capture them all, and thus year after year the river would get an increased supply for sport and for breeding purposes, until its net fisheries and anglings would yield, as they undoubtedly should do, greatly increased profits to the netters, with large rents or splendid sport to the riparian owners.

Amongst other well-known angling names on the Slaney are those of the Marquis of Waterford, Lord Ruthven, Sir Shirley Salt, the late General Pottinger, Colonels Eustace, Knox Browne, and Percy, together with Messrs. Barclay Thompson, Sim, Adair, and Pike, this last-named angler getting fourteen fish from "Kildavin" and "Drumderry" in two April days of 1901.

In addition to the evils of over-netting, the use of too small a mesh, and the capture of kelts by the netsmen, the Slaney suffers in a lesser degree from poaching and kelt-killing by the anglers of the free water; from fry-killing by lads and others; from a want of proper passes in some of the weirs, with a lack of proper guards to some of the mill-wheels.

These are, however, but minor evils ; and if the riparian proprietors could be assured that some limit would be placed on the numbers of the nets, all other difficulties would be overcome and the river quickly restored to its former excellence.

If the river was properly stocked, there would be good angling right up to Baltinglass, which is about twenty miles above Clohamon Weir. March, April, and May are the best angling months, for in June and later the river usually runs low, when but little is done.

The bait is more in use than the fly, the favourites being sprats in high water with the stone loach (locally called " colleek ") in ordinary water. The fly, however, usually gets a turn before the bait is resorted to, and would account for plenty of fish if there were only more of them. Most of the medium-sized standard patterns will kill, but of course there are many local ones, the chief of which is the " Blue-black," dressed as follows :—

Tag. A few turns of gold tinsel, with one of orange pig's wool or seal.

Tail. A topping or a few fibres from the neck-feather of the golden pheasant.

Body. Very dark blue pig's wool with narrow gold tinsel, dark orange hackle from half-way up body, blue jay at shoulder.

Wings. Brown mallard over a few fibres of peacock sword-feather.

There are no restrictions as to carrying a gaff, but it is expected that kelts will be netted or hand-lined and returned unhurt.

Quitting Enniscorthy, we will make our way to New Ross, at the mouth of the Barrow and the Nore : the former,

with a course of one hundred and twenty miles, receives ten large tributaries with a total length of a further one hundred and sixty miles, and has a drainage area of eleven hundred and eighty-four square miles; the latter with a run of eighty-seven miles, in which it is joined by six big feeders, making up a total of another one hundred and twenty miles, and a catchment basin of nine hundred and seventy-seven square miles.

Here, then, we have over two hundred miles of main rivers, apart from their tributaries, while, sad to relate, in the whole of this distance there is hardly a pool worth casting at the present time, though twenty-five years ago there were many anglings on the Barrow and the Nore that yielded from two to five fish a *day*, where now the take is only from two to five in a whole season, and often, indeed, not one!

The Barrow rises in the Bloom Mountains of Queen's County, and after flowing north and then east, it takes a sudden bend to the south, soon after which it passes Portarlington, and flowing by Athy, Carlow, Bagenalstown, Borris, and New Ross, it finds its way by Waterford Harbour into St. George's Channel. As it is a somewhat muddy, sluggish river, with many obstructions, it has never been such a good angling stream as the Nore. In the twenty-five miles or thereabouts which are between the tideway and Bagenalstown there are no less than fourteen navigation weirs, in none of which are there proper King's Gaps, the existing ones being only four feet wide with a depth of two feet. Above Bagenalstown there are nine other weirs; but as fish only reach that part of the river after the end of the open season, these gaps are not poached so hard as those lower down, although as soon

LEIGHLIN BRIDGE, CARLOW

THE NORE AT KILKENNY

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as fish do arrive in the upper waters the depredations commence.

All these weirs are easily, surely, and systematically poached by a " drum net " set right across the entire width of the gap. To this net a long string is attached, by which the poacher, retiring to a distance, can pull the net out of the pass at the first approach of anyone suspicious.

We could only hear of one small portion of the Barrow being let for angling, and that was at Mount Loftus, while, as the lessee seldom got a fish, the rent was almost nominal.

The Nore, which is a more rapid river than the Barrow, rises in the north-western confines of Tipperary, and after a northerly run of some fifteen miles it turns to the south, and, flowing past Abbeyleix, Durrow, Ballyragget, Kilkenny, and Thomastown, it falls into the estuary at New Ross, to mix its waters with those of the Barrow. The tidal water extends nearly to Inistioge, some ten miles above New Ross, and here Captain Tighe of Woodstock has a several fishery, three miles of which is in tidal water and two in fresh. It is worked by a weir with one seine net, which is never used at full pressure, for the owner is more anxious to preserve the fish and restore the river than to make a profit, with which laudable end in view he has recently started a large hatchery, the remarkable success of which from the very outset has been due entirely to the cleverness of Captain Tighe's manager, Major E. C. Hamilton, who estimates he has turned into the river about half a million fry each season. As the total cost of erection was under £150, with a further expense of £50 a year for the wages of the man who attends to it, surely this is a very moderate outlay in view of the benefits it is

hoped will accrue. It is not, therefore, the Woodstock nets that are harmful to the Nore. From 1889 to 1895 their average take each season was 513 fish. Up to May of 1895 the inhabitants of Inistioge and the adjoining townlands claimed an equal right with the owner of the fishery to fish within its limits, until an injunction was obtained from the Master of the Rolls restraining them from doing so. Captain Tighe now permits a certain number of those who formerly claimed the right still to fish subject to certain limitations; therefore, to the returns of his nets, which have averaged 707 fish during recent seasons since they have been in his own hands, must be added the number of fish caught by these "permits." Thirty-five years ago plenty of anglers could go out when the Nore was in order during March, April, and May, and get from two to five fish a day; now only a few rods frequent the picked and privately preserved parts, but instead of getting takes as of old, from six to twelve fish per rod is a good score for the whole season, and lucky to get that.

In 1869 there were three hundred and one rod licences taken out for the Barrow, Nore, and Suir, as against two hundred and eighty-four net licences. In 1855 the figures were two hundred and eighty-four of the former to three hundred and seventy-five of the latter; then, in 1898, the rods dropped to one hundred and seventy and the nets to two hundred and ninety-three, a falling-off of one hundred and thirty-one in the rod licences and of eighty-two net licences from the highest point—figures which plainly show the decrease of the fish. The funds available for protection are wholly inadequate; while if by chance a few convictions are obtained, they are laughed at, for the fines are so small as compared with the profits of the

poacher—they are either paid by a " whip round " amongst themselves or by the fishmongers who buy from them; and it seems as if the only way to stop these depredations effectually would be the passing of a law to the effect that a second or third conviction should entail imprisonment, with forfeiture of the licence if there was one. The close times are wholly and openly disregarded, for on any Sunday night during the netting season upwards of a hundred nets may be seen fishing between Inistioge and Cheekpoint.

The cost of a draft-net is about £5, while a snap-net costs but 10s. or 15s. There exists a good deal of jealousy between the users of the two kinds, and it is amusing to read in the Blue Books how a fisher of a draft-net (which cannot be quickly hidden, and which, if seized, costs about ten times more to replace than if it was a snap-net) gravely puts it to the Commissioners that it is a hardship on the draft-net men that they cannot poach with the same facile impunity as the snap-net men!

If better protection was forthcoming, Lord de Vesci of Abbeyleix, though not an angler himself, has offered to erect and maintain a large hatchery at his own expense; but until the incessant poaching that goes on all the year by the estuary nets, and until the wholesale massacre of spawning fish in the river and its tributaries can be prevented, any expenditure on that head would be money wasted, and only prove an additional incentive to harder poaching and closer netting by more nets.

Perhaps the only reach on the Nore that is still worth the angler's attention is that which belongs to the Earl of Carrick at Mount Juliet by Thomastown, as his gamekeepers assist the water-bailiffs.

The nets and rods commence for both rivers on the 1st of February, the former ceasing on the 15th of August and the latter on the 30th of September.

THE SUIR

Leaving New Ross, we will work our way by train to Clonmel, on the Suir, which is rather a larger river than either of those just dealt with, but suffering even more severely from all those evils already mentioned as gradually destroying the salmon of the Barrow and the Nore.

The Suir rises in some hills on the northern boundary of Tipperary, only a few miles to the south of the source of the Nore, receiving during its course of one hundred and fourteen miles thirteen large tributaries, which make up a total of two hundred and thirty-five miles and a drainage area of one thousand three hundred and ninety-four square miles. After a short run eastwards it turns to the south, and passing Templemore and Thurles, twenty-five miles then intervene before it flows through Cahir and on to Clonmel, from whence it has a tortuous run of a further twenty miles until the tideway is reached a little above Carrick-on-Suir, where it forms a long, narrow estuary of some thirty miles before it falls into Waterford Harbour.

Up till about 1884 this was one of the best spring angling rivers of Ireland, for fish were not only plentiful but very heavy, some of 45 lb. being captured every season. Any beats between Clonmel and Golden, such as those of Ardfinnan, Neddins, Cahir Park, Newcastle, Knocklofty, Glenahiery, and Newtown Anner, were formerly never in the market for long without finding tenants at good rents.

THE ESTUARY AT NEW ROSS

THE SUIR AT CLONMEL

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At that time a stretch above Cahir was let to a syndicate of English gentlemen at £200 a year, while now it is unlettable at any price, for the angling above Cahir has been nearly wiped out; while still higher up the river, at Ardmayle, Colonel Mansergh, of Grallagh Castle, Thurles, who fished there (as long as there was anything to catch) for nearly fifty years, has indeed a pitiful tale to tell of actual extermination, which should convince everyone concerned that unless a speedy and thorough change be made in the management of this river the salmon must eventually be annihilated.

The Ardmayle waters were fished for about ten years from 1863 by nine rods, who used to average about 150 fish per season between them, some scaling as much as 45 lb. Then Colonel Mansergh with a friend fished the water up to 1884, getting only about fourteen fish a season. In 1890 the take had fallen to two fish, in 1893 only one was caught, and then in the six years up to 1899 there has never been another capture! which is the clearest demonstration possible that when the upper waters of a river are rendered fishless, then sudden decay must inevitably overtake, as it has done, the stock of fish in the tidal and lower fresh-water reaches.

The angling at Ardmayle covers some eight miles of both banks, owned by various proprietors, who now do not take the trouble to preserve it, as there is nothing to preserve, so almost the whole of this stretch is at present open to all. Commencing at Holycross village, it goes down to Golden, in which distance there are numerous fine casts, all reachable from one bank or the other by an eighteen-foot rod, and capable, if well stocked, of carrying fully a dozen hard-working anglers. Some of the best

pools used to be those of Potter's Hole, Connolly's, the Meeting, Chimney Field, Painter's Hole, Straps, Pig's Hole, Chadwick's, and many others.

Colonel Mansergh swears by but four flies for the upper water, viz. the Blue and Orange, the Mystery, the Suir Blue, and Dunkeld. If none of these prove killers, then it is time to give the baits a trial.

Twenty-five years ago it was rare to get a fish under 12 lb., and, while 30 lb. was not uncommon, Colonel Mansergh has seen two of 46 lb. each. Dark, showery weather, with high water, is the best for all the reaches above Cahir, the river keeping in order for ten days after a flood.

Between Golden and Cahir the Viscountess Lismore owns the Ballydrehid Water, the Earl of Stanhope that of Knockgraffon, while Mr. A. Going has Derrydowney, each of these anglings being about a mile in length on one bank only, while the anglings above Cahir are fast approaching the same fishless state that already exists above Golden.

The Cahir Park Water, belonging to Lady Margaret Charteris, is about a mile and a half of both banks. It will carry three rods, while none of them need to wade. In the eight years from 1883 to 1890 it yielded an average per season of forty fish of 13 lb. to two rods, the largest number in a season being eighty-five, with thirteen the smallest. Then in the eight years following, from 1891 to 1898, the average came down to twenty-five fish a season to two rods, the highest take for a season being forty-two and the lowest eight.

The Neddins Water, also the property of Lady Margaret, and extending for two miles on one bank and one and a

MISS PERRY'S HOUSE AT NEWCASTLE

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half on the other, shows the same lamentable falling-off. Here two rods took in the eleven years from 1876 to 1886 691 fish, averaging 13 lb., or within a fraction of sixty-three fish per season, eighty-six the largest, thirty-six the smallest take. In the following eleven years, from 1887 to 1897, the total captures fell to 243 fish, or an average of twenty-two a season — forty-two the best, and eight the worst.

The Ardfinnan Water, a famous beat until the general deterioration set in, lies below these two fisheries; it was rented in the eighties for some years by my friend the late Mr. Deacon, who killed many heavy fish on it.

Below this is the Newcastle Water, belonging to Miss Perry, covering one and a half miles of the right bank, which will carry two rods, and is sometimes let. Farther down, the Earl of Donoughmore owns a very fine stretch of water at Knocklofty, which is also occasionally let, and extends for five and a half miles, two of them being on both banks. Here there are many ideal casts, some of the best being Big Rock Point, Paddy's, Bubble and Bridge streams, Poulawilling, Roxboro, the Castle Pool, and Sally stream, all of which, with the others, can be fished from the bank in the spring, though in low water three of them are waded with wading trousers.

February, March, and April are the best months, although when there is rain May is often good. By the end of that month the weed-growth spoils some of the pools, only the streams remaining fishable. Grilse run in June and July, while of sea trout there are none.

In the spring this angling will carry five or six rods, while later on there is always room for three. An eighteen-foot rod is required for the fly, with a shorter one for bait

work. Early in the season flies may be used up to 5/0 Limerick—exactly two inches of iron—the most killing ones being Jock Scot, Popham, Blue and Black Doctor, Green Butcher, Parson and Childers. For baits, Phantom and Devon minnow, sprats, stone loach, and worms are all employed, the Devon being the favourite lure in high water, not so much on account of its superior attractions as to the advantage gained by its weight, which enables anyone to cast it a long distance without much previous practice ; in low water the shrimp is the best lure.

There are no restrictions as to carrying a gaff, but it is expected that kelts will be netted or hand-lined, and returned uninjured. Salmon average 13 lb. and grilse 4½ lb., while on this section each rod may be pretty sure of getting two or three fish a week all through the spring season. Of late years three in a day has been the record, while during each spring there are always some heavy ones to deal with.

Here are the catches made recently on Lord Donoughmore's Knocklofty angling :—

1908	63 fish.	Average 13·3 lb.
1909	49 „	„ 14·37 „
1910	100 „	„ 11·89 „
1911	69 „	„ 15·7 „
1912	55 „	„ 16·8 „

His Lordship's opinion is " that it has been conclusively proved that the rod fishing has deteriorated owing to the systematic poaching in the close time by net fishermen, and he has not a doubt that they are fortified by the knowledge that if they are caught breaking the law their fines are almost invariably reduced by the powers that be to childish figures."

The rod takes on the Cahir Park waters are as follows :—

1905 . . .	49 fish.	1908 . . .	42 fish.
1906 . . .	47 ,,	1909 . . .	55 ,,
1907 . . .	48 ,,	1910 . . .	74 ,,

On Neddins Water they are :—

1904 . . .	25 fish.	1908 . . .	33 fish.
1906 . . .	18 ,,	1910 . . .	32 ,,
1907 . . .	10 ,,		

Poor catches indeed, and hardly worth mentioning except as showing how the angling is going down.

Below Knocklofty Lord Ashtown has the Glenahiery Water, the Duchess of St. Albans coming in at Newtown Anner.

The Suir opens for nets and rods on the 1st of February, the former coming off on the 15th of August and the latter on the 15th of October.

Between Clonmel and Carrick there are eleven miles of most severely netted fresh water; for as the main channel, up which the fish must travel, is under twenty-three feet in width, hardly one can escape the fifteen snap-nets at work, except it has the good luck to run through this stretch of water in the night. For a fish to run it in the weekly close time is just as hard a matter as attempting it in the open time, for the very simple reason that few of the netters observe it.

Some very strange proceedings came to light at the most recent inquiry, held at Waterford Courthouse by the Fishery Commissioners. One of the snap-net men, who, judging from his evidence, was possessed of unusual intelligence and education, attributed all the harm gradually being wrought to the Suir to two causes only: first, the unrestrained massacre of the breeding fish on the spawning

beds; secondly, to the lawless state of affairs prevailing between Clonmel and Coolnamuck Weir. He boldly stated that at one time the fifteen snap-nets on this water fished the whole year round! and that the men had leave to do it. It began by a Conservator—*credat Judæus*—giving them permission to fish with their nets as long as anglers fished with rods, which by degrees grew into netting the whole year round. "Fish away, and do not mind the police," said this precious Conservator. After several years of this lawless work, some of the wisest and best-disposed of the netters, seeing that they were ruining their own industry, gave it up of their own accord. The witness also stated that this Conservator employed many of the snap-net men to fish for him, and that he bought the fish they poached, while the water-bailiffs shared in the profits of the business!

Truly a scandalous state of affairs, but one which looks as if it was true, for the Commissioners at once directed the attention of the Secretary to the Conservators to the matter, who characterised it as a grave charge which would be investigated. As it has not been contradicted in the Blue Book in which it appeared, or in any subsequent Blue Book, it is to be feared that the outspoken Michael Carroll could not be contradicted.

Would that there were more net fishermen of his way of thinking, for then the rivers would soon right themselves. In giving his evidence, Michael boldly confessed to having given poaching a thorough good trial, while proceeding to declare that he was now dead against it, for that he and others had realised it was impossible to have good netting for many seasons in succession at the mouth of a river in which over-netting and poaching had left no breeding stock.

A short distance above Carrick is the much-abused

KILMANAHAN CASTLE

CLONMEL IN A FLOOD

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weir of Coolnamuck, the property of the Marquis of Waterford, who has let it on a lease at £10 a year, there being still seven years to run. This weir is about one hundred yards in length, the fish being taken in a killing box as they attempt the ascent. Its opponents say the weir has been illegally altered, and that the King's Gap is so placed as to be of little or no use; but as the fifteen snap-nets which work above it continue to fish their hardest, so long as their numbers do not diminish it must be presumed they get enough fish to make it pay, which is, we think, a good proof that this weir is not such a dire obstruction to the river as its opponents try to make out, while also the greater part of its catch consists of grilse.

From Carrick right away down to Duncannon Lighthouse, near the entrance of Waterford Harbour, a distance of some thirty miles, the narrow estuary is simply "a river of twine," fished by about ninety nets (most of them drift-nets), wholly regardless of any weekly close time. Now many of those who gave evidence before the Commission remarked on how strange it was that of late years hardly any kelts ever returned to the Suir as large fish. It is indeed remarkable that although so many mentioned this fact, one and all, including the Commissioners themselves, should have been so wholly at a loss for a solution of the mystery, which lies in a nutshell—the drift-nets are undoubtedly the cause, for they catch (and whatever they catch they *kill*) kelts returning to the sea with even greater facility than they catch the clean fish coming out of it. They are the most destructive and wasteful nets that have ever been invented, and wherever they have made their appearance they have never failed to bring ruin.

They have been abolished from the mouth of the

Slaney—why, then, should they be permitted in the estuary of the Suir? Verily these are nets that should be improved off the face of all the waters of the United Kingdom. That has been their just fate in England and Scotland, and how can any device that is bad for those countries be good for Ireland?

Abolish the drift-nets, limit the draft-nets, and suppress the poaching of the fish in the tributaries and upper waters, and then the Suir anglings would soon rank as high as those of any other river in the United Kingdom. Its spawning facilities are unrivalled; but the poachers always kill the fish before they have spawned, as they well know that one salmon got before it has spawned has a market value equivalent to about half a dozen fish killed after spawning, and thus the fish are poached the moment they show.

In taking leave of the Suir, we must say that it struck us as a river eminently qualified to become, by a "combine," the Aberdeen Dee of Ireland. This might be effected by a combination of the river proprietors above Clonmel to rent the netting rights of the riparian owners from below Clonmel down to Coolnamuck Weir. At present these rights are let to the snap-net men at a mere trifle—a few pounds (in all cases under £5) or a few fish is the consideration, while more often than not a promise to pay is all that is ever received. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that these bank owners would welcome any offer that *guaranteed* them a fair rent, with the chance of increasing it considerably by letting the angling as the river improved.

Then with regard to Coolnamuck Weir, now let at £10 per annum, with seven years to run, the syndicate

would probably experience no great difficulty in buying out the present lessee; while, even if he proved obdurate and asked a prohibitive price, they could afford to offer the Marquis of Waterford an increased rent for the weir when the lease ended, only working it in either case sufficiently long to recoup their outlay.

It might be assumed that the Marquis, who is himself an angler, would rather let to a syndicate, who would only carry on netting on a limited scale, with a view of restoring the river and getting a good rent for their now nearly valueless anglings, than to anyone who would catch every fish he could, as a matter of business. If some scheme of this sort could be carried out, and if protection could be ensured to the spawning fish, then from Clonmel to above Golden there would be some thirty miles of both banks of fine spring angling, which would realise at only the modest rent of £50 for each mile of both banks £1500, and probably a great deal more. Needless for us to point out how the tradespeople, ghillies, and others would benefit by the expenditure of the fifty or sixty or even more anglers that would thus be drawn to the banks of the Suir.

CHAPTER IX

The Blackwater of County Cork

This river has a course of one hundred and four miles, during which it receives ten large tributaries, with a total length of two hundred and twenty miles, while there is a further three hundred miles of smaller streams, which altogether make upwards of seven hundred miles to be protected, with a drainage area of one thousand two hundred and eighty-five square miles.

The Blackwater has its source in some wild, rocky hills on the borders of Kerry, and, after flowing nearly due south for some fifteen miles, it turns to the east near Rathmore Station, on the Great Southern & Western Railway, alongside of which it runs more or less for the rest of its fresh-water course, passing Mallow, Fermoy, Ballyduff, and Lismore. At Cappoquin it once more turns due south to meet the tideway, to find its outlet to the sea at Youghal by a long, narrow estuary of fifteen miles.

The guide-books describe this river as the "Irish Rhine," but, having spent many happy days on each of them, we confess to being quite unable to see where the "made in Germany" comes in. If forced to make a comparison, some parts of the Tweed, or the lower reaches of the North Esk or Deveron, would be nearer the mark, and convey a better idea of its character.

From Mallow to Fermoy it flows at a rapid rate, streams and pools quickly following each other; then for about two miles below Fermoy it widens into a long, deep stretch of what is apparently dead water, until, on coming to Clondulane Weir, it wakes up once more at the top of Careysville, where rapids and pools again follow each other at very short intervals.

The vicissitudes of the river have been remarkable, for prior to 1862 it was almost fishless, the whole of the Careysville angling being let for £50 a season!

This was caused by the inefficient construction of the King's Gap in Lismore Weir, which was almost a complete barrier to ascending fish. In 1862 an improvement in the gap resulted in the whole river becoming quickly stocked with fish, the various anglings being then eagerly taken up at high rents. These good times lasted until 1883, when a decline set in, which, commencing in the upper waters, continued slowly, but surely, to 1895, when it suddenly became very pronounced in all parts of the river, including the estuary.

This decay was attributed—and rightly so, we think—firstly, to over-netting by snap-nets in the fresh water, and to over-netting by drift-nets in the estuary; secondly, to the current having by degrees altered the accessibility of the King's Gap, in Lismore Weir, whereby the bulk of the fish were induced to seek an easier passage, which led them into the killing-box.

With regard to the fresh-water nets, the question at once presented itself as to whether the riparian owners would not be entitled to compensation in the event of their nets being done away with, whereupon Mr. J. H. Jones, Clerk to the Conservators, and Inspector to the Waterford

CAREYSVILLE WATER, CLONDULANE WEIR IN THE DISTANCE

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Board, proposed the following scheme for automatically compensating those deprived of their nettings; and, although the idea was not adopted, as it is a cleverly thought-out plan which has not hitherto been mentioned, it is well worth recording as a guide to other Conservators when called on to deal with similar cases.

"I would suggest," says Mr. Jones, "that a sworn declaration should be made as to the average rent obtained for netting for a period of, say, five years before the passing of an Act to abolish fresh-water netting, this average rent to be guaranteed to the proprietor of the fishery for, say, two years. The abolition of netting should greatly enhance the value of rod fishing, and I anticipate that the rent for such fisheries would be greatly enhanced. A sworn declaration should be made each year of the rents obtained for rod fishing, and a duty at, say, ten per cent. should be levied to create a fund to repay the amounts payable to those deprived of rights of net fishing. When any fishery deprived of former rights of netting is let for rod fishing, and such rent is less than the previous netting rent, then only the difference should be paid as compensation. When the rod rent exceeds the netting rent, then a ten per cent. duty should be leviable on the difference. Thus in a short time the compensation payable to those deprived of right of netting would be paid off by those benefiting by abolition of netting, viz. the lessors of rod fishing. The ten per cent. duty on rod rentals to cease when the netting compensation shall have ceased, and I anticipate that on very few net fisheries will any compensation be payable for any loss of rental."

Prior to 1883, when the Duke of Devonshire established his claims, there were one hundred and twenty boats

at Youghal holding netting licences, and though the Duke has considerably reduced the number in his waters, there are still three stake weirs, eighteen draft-nets, eighty-nine drift-nets, and twenty-seven snap-nets working between Lismore and Youghal, in a distance of some twenty miles of narrow waters. This gives a total of one hundred and thirty-seven salmon traps of one sort or another, which, if equally distributed, would mean a trap in about every two hundred and fifty yards for twenty miles ; and yet there are people who wonder why fish are scarce !

In addition to the Duke's nettings there are those of Sir Richard Musgrave of Tourin, Mr. Usher, and Mr. Villiers Stuart. With regard to the Dromana Fishery of this last-named gentleman, in 1895 the take was 6222 fish, in which there were about three grilse to every salmon ; in 1897 it had fallen to 2178, while in 1898 the lowest ebb was reached with only 1779. In 1899 this had risen to 2431.

Judging, then, from the returns of these three Dromana draft-nets, which since 1886 up to 1889 have taken an average of 3033 fish per season, it will certainly not be over-estimating the total take of the whole river from Lismore to Youghal at 30,000 fish. Probably it is a good deal more, but the calculation is based on the returns of " salmon and trout " carried by the railway company from only the three stations of Lismore, Cappoquin, and Youghal, which amount to 121 tons, which would give 27,000 fish of 10 lb. each—a very high estimate of average weight if there are three grilse to each salmon.

Having regard to the fact that during the ten years, from 1890 to 1900, the proprietors above Fermoy have hardly seen a fish in the open season, and that their

THE BLACKWATER AT LISMORE CASTLE

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anglings have become valueless, and that they have not caught a thousand fish to their rods in the past ten years, while the nets have taken fully 300,000, surely this confirms their cry of over-netting beyond contradiction.

There are three tributary streams running through the property of Mr. Villiers Stuart—the Finisk, the Lickey, and the Geoch—which have always been hard poached, notwithstanding that their proprietor has given stringent instructions for its suppression. His caretakers frankly told him they were powerless, and that it was as much as their lives were worth to interfere!

Then on the 1st of January, with the opening of the Waterville River in the Killarney district, every poacher is on the look-out for the chance of sneaking a clean fish, for which he will get a good price, and which the fish-dealer can openly dispose of as "Kerry Salmon"!

Thanks, however, to the untiring and plucky efforts of Mr. Thomas Drohan, the Inspector of the Blackwater, poaching is no longer the easy matter it used to be, for his courage and resourcefulness have, in a great measure, overawed the evil-doers.

On this river, for the first time in these books, we meet with a new form of poaching, viz. by spurge, a weed which grows ready to hand all along the river banks, though it is chiefly used on the upper waters. It resembles St. John's wort, and is prepared for use by chopping or tearing it up in a turnip- or furze-cutting machine. Sometimes the roots are used, but more often the stems. Two or three sacks are filled with these crushed pieces, and placed under a fall in shallow water, where they are trampled underfoot until the poisonous scum begins to float down the stream; while, as the fish take from two to

three hours to die, the operation is timed so that they may float ashore just as dawn breaks. Three sacks full of spurge will poison from half a mile to a mile and a half of river, the distance depending on the height of the water, while, fortunately, it has no effect in times of flood.

Inspector Drohan describes the action of this poison very vividly: "The first thing a fish does when it meets the poison, which is of a milky kind, is to jump up many feet high; then he runs this way and that way; finally, he will wave from head to tail, and then try to find some relief on a stone. Soon the gills commence to open and the head faces the stream; he drops off the stone, and the white of the belly turns up. When fish are poisoned by spurge, the head is always turned up stream with the gills wide open; when they are poisoned by lime, the head is always down stream, with the gills quite closed, while there is a scum on the eyes."

It is a curious circumstance that the actions of the two poisons should be so different. These poisonings are also very difficult to detect, for they are frequently done out of spite, as a revenge for a previous conviction; while as in such cases no attempt is made to recover the fish that are killed, the discovery of the perpetrator becomes almost impossible.

Mr. Usher, who owns a netting station at Camphire, a little above the mouth of the Bride, informed the Fishery Commissioners of his conviction that the smolts go to the sea in April and May, returning in June or July following as grilse, which had been proved by marking the smolts; and it would indeed have been interesting to have heard the total number that were marked, how it was done, what was the weight of the returning grilse, where they were

caught, and by whom. Mr. Usher further says that the run of smolts to the sea is always a heavy one, although they do not return in any quantity as grilse. He thinks that something goes wrong with them in the sea before they become grilse, and many others who have given evidence to the Commissioners are of the same way of thinking. This must, however, be conjecture only, and to our way of thinking there is a more easily discovered cause, for Mr. Usher either forgets or overlooks the seventy odd drift-nets working below his fishery; and small wonder he gets but few grilse when these numerous and deadly nets intercept the greater part of the run.

With regard to the Duke of Devonshire's nettings, when the number of the boats was reduced, he imposed a charge of £10 on each net below the bridge and £7 on each one above it—this was in addition to the £3 licence paid to the Conservators; also, any fisherman taking a netting on this water is informed that, should he be reported for illegal fishing, his licence will be forfeited and a future one refused. This system has worked admirably, for the men quickly recognised it would be better for them to pay £13 or £10 for the right of fishing in company with a small *fixed* number of nets, than for them to pay only £3 and have to contend against an unlimited number of nets. In the latter case they made a bare hand-to-mouth living—often not even that; while in the former case, whatever the fluctuations of a season might result in, yet the profits were always substantial.

Nothing shows more quickly or more accurately the falling-away of the angling of a river than a decline in the number of rod licences taken out in any given district. In 1895 there were two hundred and seventy-five of these

issued ; in 1900 they had fallen to one hundred and fifty-nine, or a decrease of one hundred and sixteen. From 1879 to 1889 the hotels at Mallow and Fermoy were full of gentlemen coming to fish in the springtime; but for the last ten years visitors have vanished, while the anglings above Fermoy have become unlettable. Absolute ruin has come to waters that formerly were renowned for their sport.

Five or six fish a day was a common matter when Mr. Hamilton Stubber had the Carrick fishings at Mallow, for he took one hundred and sixty-seven to his own rod in one season, which take fell off regularly and rapidly until, five years later, his captures were but thirteen fish for the whole season, when, naturally, he shook the water from his brogues and departed, while with him went a considerable sum of money expended in the neighbourhood. These losses were feelingly alluded to by Mr. R. E. Longfield of Longueville, four miles above Mallow, and Chairman of the Board of Conservators, who, when giving his evidence to the Commissioners, said—

"I only wish to emphasise the very serious loss that absence of fish in a river is, not only to the proprietors, but to an enormous number of people. I think a salmon river well stocked is almost a gold-mine in a district. Everybody profits by it. Hotel keepers, car drivers, professional fishermen, and everybody derive some profit from it, and there is a very great advantage in this."

Mr. Longfield is quite right about the "gold-mine," for there are fully twenty-five miles of good angling above Fermoy, and if this were fished by only twenty-five anglers for three months or only thirteen weeks of the season, then, apart from rentals, and taking the expenses of each in-

dividual at 20s. a day, there would be £2275 for division amongst the working bees living on the banks.

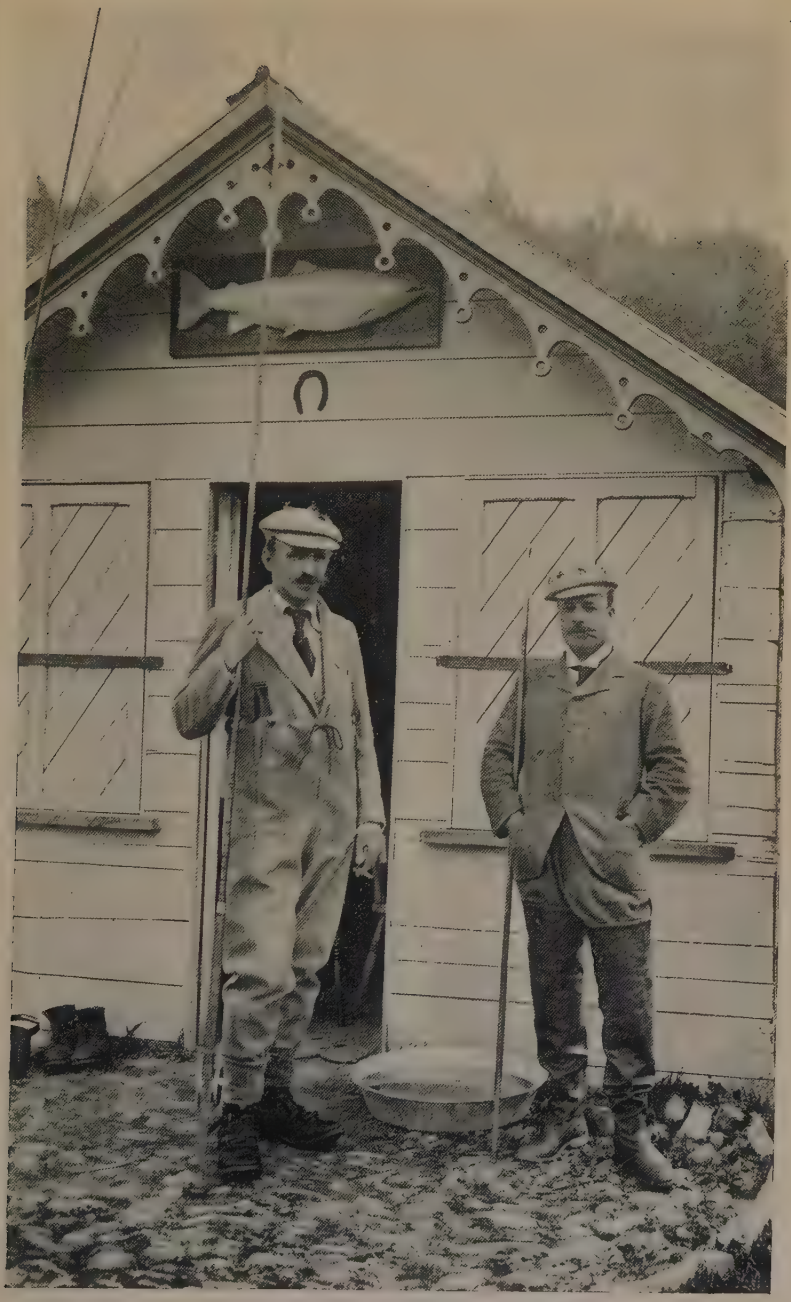
From Mallow downwards there are the anglings of Lombardstown, Gortmore, Carrigacunna Castle, Clifford, Carrig, and Convamore, all of which were occupied by anglers in the eighties.

The Carrigacunna Castle Water, close to Castletown Roche Station, and owned by Mr. George Carleton Foott, is typical of the others, and consists of about one and a half miles of the right bank, with the islands belonging to that side. Its fourteen catches used to be let for £60 a season. Some of the pools were cast from the bank, others by wading (*trousers*), and a few from a boat, the best being the Island, Ditch, Castle Insh, Chestnut-Insh, Black Stone, Cummane's Stream, and Felvey's Step. An eighteen-foot rod is required, while the gaff may be carried the whole season. The best flies are Silver Grey, Green and Grey, Blue and Orange, Jock Scot, and the Palmer ; while for baits, worms, shrimps, colley, minnows, natural and artificial, are all used. Heavy fish have been taken from this water even up to 45 lb., though the average is 13 lb. In May 1901 ten fish were got here by Mr. A. Grove Annesley in a week, and it is delightful to be able to say that there has been better sport on the Upper Blackwater in 1901 than for many years past, thanks to Lord Warwick, of which further details when we come to discuss Careysville.

All the waters between Mallow and Fermoy are fairly rapid, while quickly coming into or going out of order. Perhaps the best of the upper waters is that of Convamore, belonging to Lord Listowell, who, keeping in his own hands that part of the river which flows through his grounds, formerly used to let some three miles of fine fishing outside

the domain. This beautiful stretch of water is tenantless nowadays, simply because it is practically fishless.

Some two miles below Fermoy comes the celebrated angling of Careysville, owned by Mr. George Montgomery. Commencing immediately below Clondulane Weir, it resembles in that respect the equally famous fishing of the Dupplin Castle Reserved Water of the Earn, in Perthshire. This Clondulane Weir, with the faulty construction of the King's Gap in it, has been loudly complained of as barring the ascent of fish in certain heights of water, but, as far as our humble judgment goes, there is never at any time a hindrance to fish that really wish to pass up, for there is always a good supply of water coming through the gap, while in times of flood fish could run the weir itself, for under the same conditions they swim the weir at Dupplin with ease, which has a greater height and a steeper gradient than the one at Clondulane. It must not be forgotten that wherever there have been weirs there have ever been complaints and growlings, no matter how well constructed the gap may have been or how easy it has been made in times of high water for the fish to swim the weir itself. A weir is usually placed at the foot of a long stretch of dead water, while it is the nature of a spring salmon to lie and splash about and enjoy itself in the streams for some length of time; it has no great desire to swim upwards in the springtime except by the easiest of stages, for if it ceaselessly plied tail and fins it would find itself on its spawning ground in the upper reaches months before it was ready to spawn, and its natural instinct tells it to pass away the time in the larger volume of the streams of the lower reaches. Thus as the water rush below a weir offers to salmon all that they most desire, small wonder they should always



THE EARL OF WARWICK AND EARL CAIRNS AT THE CAREYSVILLE HUT

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congregate there and refuse to quit such pleasant quarters, although perfectly free to pass on if so minded. It is not the weir or the gap that holds the fish back, it is the fish that refuse to budge.

Although the Careysville fishings have been held by many gentlemen who have been famed for their attainments and rank as well as their angling prowess, it was yet the luckiest day the Blackwater had experienced for a long time when, in 1896, the Earl of Warwick (who had previously fished at Careysville for about ten seasons) took a long lease of the upper water and at once set vigorously to work to try and improve not only his own angling but that of the whole of the river.

In the season of 1900 a subscription was got up, chiefly by the Earl, in conjunction with the proprietors and the tenants of anglings below Careysville, to rent and open the killing hatch in Lismore Weir for the first three months of the season; and to this, and this only, is to be attributed the good sport that was had in April and May of the year following on the reaches above Fermoy, which for the ten previous years had been nearly fishless.

Mr. James Lamont of Knockdow, Argyllshire, and of Arctic exploration fame, had Careysville before Lord Warwick. A comparison of his takes made in the "eighties" with those of later years will show how rapidly the anglings even of this famous water have deteriorated. From the 1st of February to the end of May:—

1881, upper and lower beats	333 fish.
1882 „ „	334 „
1883, lower beat only	331 „
1884 „	301 „
1885 „	416 „
1886 „	225 „

1887, lower beat only	228 fish.
1888 „	212 „
1889, only partially fished	169 „
1890, lower beat only	225 „
1891 „	364 „ [1]
1892 „	243 „
1893 „	194 „
1894 „	118 „
1895, return lost.	
1896, Earl of Warwick, upper beat.	164 „
1897, upper beat	189 „
1898 „	156 „
1899 „	72 „

The above takes were chiefly made in March and April, though the months of February and May each contributed a certain amount.

The upper water is the best of the two sections, each consisting of about a mile of both banks of nearly continuous angling in rapid streams and quick-flowing flats. Fish average 15 lb., though Lord Warwick has seen one of 42 lb. taken, and has himself had one of 35 lb.

When giving his evidence of the angling decay before the Fishery Commissioners, as further confirmation of the "gold-mine" views of Mr. Longfield, the Earl mentioned his own expenditure. "For instance," said he, "I pay £450 a year for the angling, in addition to the rent of my house. I employ four fishermen on the Upper water, and there are tradesmen's bills from the town of Fermoy amounting to £300 for my two months, besides carmen and so on. That all represents money coming into the country from England, which, I think, is not to be despised."

The Lower Careysville Water is of about the same extent

[1] In 1891 the four rods on the two beats killed 808 fish—444 for the upper beat.

THE CAREYSVILLE WATER. "GOT 'IM!"

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and character as the upper one. In the face of the big scores made on it, as already related, it is vexatious to have to tell how, in 1877, a friend and the author having resolved to "blow the expense" and secure a bit of really first-class angling, accordingly rented this lower water for the month of March. Commencing on the 3rd, we fished hard with every kind of lure until the 23rd, without so much as getting a single clean fish, and we left Fermoy in disgust without staying out the month, our trip having cost us about £70 each. Later on we heard on good authority that our water was cross-lined every evening after we left and every morning before we came, and that whether the keeper liked it or not, he *had* to stand in and hold his tongue!

As Lower Careysville ends on the left bank, the Kilmurray Water, belonging to Mr. T. St. John Grant, commences and goes down for about one mile and a half on the left bank, part of Careysville being opposite. It comfortably carries two rods on its six fine long streams, and, in fact, nearly the whole of the water is fishing. Some throws are reached from the bank or waded with trousers, while others are cast from a boat, depending on the height of water. Kilmurray is usually let for the spring and the summer seasons in two lets, with or without the house. The spring let is to the end of May, the summer one from the 1st of June to the 1st of October.

In the good year of 1895 there were 130 salmon and peal taken here, but since then the captures have averaged about forty fish each summer let, with perhaps three peal to each salmon. The spring take was much the same in numbers up to 1900, only that fish averaged 15 lb.; and though doubtlessly the spring take has been increased by the opening of the killing hatch, we have not been

able to procure the return of the whole of the captures since that was done, but over thirty good fish were got in the month of April 1901.

Below this is another very good piece of water, Kilbarry, belonging to Mr. Spotswood Bowles; it runs for about two miles on one side, and for one and a half on the other, and is fished by boat, from the bank, or by waders. It will take three rods with comfort, but as the last tenant, Lord Shannon, was not able to fish very regularly, it would be misleading to give the returns; though with the killing hatch open, anglers, we think, may rest assured of good sport on this water, though of course there will always be fluctuations.

The fishing cottage is close to the river, and has enough room to take three friends with a couple of servants, while supplies can be had from Fermoy, five miles off. Below this there are several smaller anglings, which, however, are not of much account. The only objection is that the river below Kilbarry is so broad that all angling has to be carried on from boats. The nets and rods begin on the 1st of February, the former ceasing on the 1st of August, the latter continuing to the 30th of September.

CHAPTER X

The Lee

Rises in the small Lough of Gouganebarra in the wild hills of the Kerry border, and flowing in an easterly direction for fifty-three miles, during which it receives seven big tributaries with a total length of one hundred and ten miles, it meets the tide at Cork, where it expands into a broad sheet of water with many currents and channels, which again narrowing to the south sends " the pleasant waters of the river Lee " (as sung of in " The Bells of Shandon ") to the sea at Queenstown in Cork Harbour.

After a run of some twelve miles from its source, it opens out into the narrow lake of Allua or Inchigiehela, and flowing by that tourist-haunted village, a further fifteen miles intervenes before it passes a little to the south of Macroom on the Sullane tributary, from whence there is a further run of much the same distance to Ballincollig, of cavalry-barrack and powder-mill fame, and then five miles farther on it divides into two streams as it flows through the city of bacon, blarney, and butter.

Poaching below, poison above, and want of funds are the three things that are slowly but surely ruining this formerly most productive river. There are fully two hundred miles of fresh water, seven miles of tidal, and thirty miles of Cork Harbour to be protected, and this has

to be attempted with an income of about £300 a year; while, as bad fishing seasons reduce the number of net and rod licences, so *pari passu* do the funds of the Conservators diminish. In 1879 there were one hundred and eighty-six rod licences taken out; in 1898 they had fallen to one hundred and forty-seven.

It is much to be regretted that the Anglers' Club, originated by the late Major Hayes in 1870, was broken up in 1880, for it was the backbone of the river preservation, as during its existence it contributed fully £1000 for protection. When it was started the angling of the river was at a very low ebb, and the Club commenced on the principle that each proprietor should open his water one day a week to the members. The whole river was divided into two sections, so that members could have two days' fishing a week, while the whole of the subscriptions were spent in guarding the water. Many of the officers quartered in Cork joined the Club, until by degrees the anglings became so much improved that their owners thought they were not getting full value for them, for fishings which did not fetch more than a few pounds a year when the Club started became to be worth £40 or £50. So the proprietors withdrew from the Club in order to let their rights privately, while they made no effort amongst themselves to continue that protection which alone had restored sport—a short-sighted, greedy policy, for in a few years the river became nearly as bad as it was prior to 1870.

The late Major Hayes was also the originator of another excellent club, the Fishermen's Society. Its members consisted of legitimate netters who fished the tidal waters below Cork. They agreed to pay to the Society a penny a pound on the weight of all the fish they caught. The

proceeds of this voluntary tax were to be used in maintaining a steam launch with bailiffs to suppress the numerous illegal drift-nets worked nearer to the sea by the poachers of Rathcoursey, who took all the fish that would otherwise come to the legal netters above.

These nets having been declared illegal in about 1890, the men who had up till that date worked them lawfully resolved not to be balked of the large profits they had hitherto made at the expense of all the netters and anglers above them, and so they continued to use them in defiance of the law, for they saw the Conservators had not funds enough to prevent them. Hence the combination of the legal netters higher up the river. No sooner did the launch commence work than Mr. E. T. Brennan, the plucky and energetic Clerk to the Cork Conservators, captured, in 1892, seventy-four of these nets, one of which was eight hundred and twenty yards in length ; in 1893 he took seventy-two others ; in 1894 he seized fifty-six ; in 1896, forty-nine ; in 1897, fourteen.

In 1898 the Rathcoursey men, finding Mr. Brennan with his launch was likely to beat them by his perseverance and cleverness, attacked the launch with about a dozen boats, and, disarming the bailiffs, ran her on some rocks and put her out of action for a long time. This little naval engagement took place in daylight within half a mile of the coastguard station at East Ferry !

In 1899 only nine nets were seized, when the poachers confessed themselves beaten, and said they would give it up. It is quite clear, however, from the persistence of the men, that this illegal netting must have been very profitable, for here we have a recorded seizure of two hundred and seventy-four nets, the longest—those ranging from six

hundred to eight hundred yards—costing about £20 each ; while, as the shortest are not to be bought under £1, it may be assumed that these poachers lost £1000 in the purchase of illegal nets before they would give up their two or three months of poaching.

As showing the large scale of their operations, it may be mentioned that on the 10th of January 1898, twenty-one days before the Lee is opened, they sent 120 spring fish into Cork market, where they were dealt in as salmon from the Waterville River, which opens on the 1st of January. At the end of the run of spring fish in March these men seek other pursuits, while as summer comes they go to the deep-sea fishing or take engagements on yachts.

At the end of 1899 the net fishings of the Lee became so poor that the men of the Fishermen's Society had not means to pay for the support of the launch, which was no sooner known to the Rathcoursey men than they again began preparing drift-nets.

Surely here is a chance for the upper proprietors to subscribe £150 or so, which is about the cost of maintaining the launch, and approach the legal netters with an offer to keep the launch going in return for a twelve hours' abstention from netting to be added to the commencement of each weekly close time?

With regard to fresh-water poaching, although there are many fish gaffed on the spawning beds to be salted for winter use by the poachers, it is chiefly by wholesale spurge-poisoning in summer dryness that they succeed in making money; and although the Lee is one of the few rivers to which the Constabulary have extended a large share of protection, neither they nor the bailiffs have been able to do away with the evil. In particular, there is one favourite

pool which is invariably poisoned once or twice each summer —Mulcahy's Hole, belonging to Sir Augustus Warren, which after a series of floods, followed by dry weather, often holds fully 100 fish.

Though the idea of eating poisoned flesh or fish is very repugnant, yet no one seems to be aware whether a spurge-killed fish is hurtful to the consumer, for it does not necessarily follow that because no immediate bad effects are to be noticed, that therefore no injury is done. We have not been able to hear of any instances of spurge having been taken directly into the human system, but, having regard to the effects of other poisons, then it is quite likely that anyone eating spurge-poisoned salmon *very often* would eventually find himself suffering from symptoms alike puzzling to patient and doctor. It is also not quite clear if even an expert—*i.e.* one who has seen hundreds of cases of spurge-poisoning—can be certain of telling a poisoned fish when exposed for sale on a slab, although the fishmonger, if duly warned by a bailiff that a parcel of poisoned fish have been sent to him, will always return them to the consignor.

We ourselves have never seen a spurge-poisoned fish, but doubtlessly they are eaten in large quantities, while apparently the only difference between netted and "spurged" fish is that the latter decompose so quickly that they will not stand anything like a long journey. Some people who have seen a great many poisoned fish say that they can always be detected by a look at the gills, which are quite or almost white when the fish has met with its death by foul play.

Mr. William Warden, who formerly rented the Sheen, the Kerry Blackwater, and other streams in Kenmare

where spurging is only too common, took some pains to find out if these fish were harmless for consumption.

The late Professor Moseley of Oxford, who was supplied by Mr. Warden with spurge for experiments, stated that the effect was entirely on the respiration of the fish, which would be quite good for food, although, owing to the want of aeration in the blood, it would decay more quickly than a netted fish.

The Lee opens on the 1st of February for nets and rods, the former coming off on the 15th of August and the latter on the 12th of October, which is quite twelve days too late if the best interests of the river are to be considered.

Mr. Robert Dunscombe, who has known the Lee for forty years, states that the last good angling season was in 1891 or 1892 ; then he took to his own rod sixty-five fish up to the 1st of May, while the year after his take fell to nine.

There are some thirty proprietors of angling between Inchigiehla and Cork. Perhaps the best on the river are those of Mashonaglass, Fergus, Nettleville, and Carrigrohane.

The first-named is owned by Mr. Sugre, and is always let. It covers two miles of the north bank, in which there are ten good casts with some corners, the best being those of Coshaduve, Crowley's Reach, Scarrive, and Bunea. It carries two rods, who get from thirty to sixty fish a season, salmon averaging 10 lb. and grilse 4 lb. As this fishery is high up the river, it is better from the early part of March onwards, unless there have been heavy January floods to take the fish to the upper waters.

There are no rules on the whole Lee as to carrying a

MR. S. HAYNES ON "COSH." "WELL GAFFED!"

POUL COOMB, FERGUS WATER

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gaff, but good sportsmen " tail " their kelts and return them uninjured ; pot-hunters gaff them, kill them, and keep them ; thoughtless mortals gaff them and throw them back to the water to take their chance of surviving.

The Fergus Water, owned by Lord Ormathwaite, though let on a lease, is sometimes sub-let, and covers about three miles of the north bank, in which there are fully a dozen good throws, all fishable dry-shod, although on a few of the streams in certain height of water wading stockings will give the angler a better command of them. Some of the best are Poul Coombe, Cosh, Corkerry Stream, Farna, and Parker's Cut. It will carry two or three rods, the take to the end of May ranging from thirty to sixty fish, and as many as half a dozen have been got in a day by one rod.

The Nettleville Water at Killinardrish, below Macroom, belongs to Mr. Robert Nettle of Nettleville, and is divided into upper and lower beats, limited to two rods on each, one of which, on the upper beat, the owner always keeps in his own hands.

The lower section is always let, the present tenant being Mr. H. Welch-Thornton of Beaurepaire Park, Basingstoke. There is a little over a mile and a half of the south or right bank in each beat, both being uninterrupted successions of pools and flats, the former fishing in low and the latter in high water. Some of the best of the fourteen good casts are Poul na Ladies, Damnit, Half Hole, Heather, Cliff Stream, and Rock Stream. Three of the pools require trousers, while a seventeen- or eighteen-foot rod is necessary, as in places the banks rise high behind the angler. From the opening day to the middle of May is the best time, while April is *the* month for the fly.

On this water fifty fish of 10 lb. average is the usual take to the middle of May. In the season of 1901, Mr. Nettle and Mr. Thornton had six fish in two hours from two pools, and sixteen in three days, while one of 42 lb. holds the record on this water. There are always some parts of it fishable unless by any chance there is a " mud flood," which of course stops all fishing. There are no sea trout. Peal run in June, but are not much fished for, while a few " blackberry " fish, as the locals call them, come up in the autumn.

The Carrigrohane angling is between three and four miles above Cork. It extends to three miles, partly on both banks, and part on the right bank.

It is limited to three rods, two of which are usually let for February and March.

A few of the streams require wading, but most of them are bank casting.

In 1896 sixty fish were got by one rod in February and March, the heaviest of which scaled 30 lb.

In 1897, in the first sixteen days of February, twenty-two fish were got of 10 lb. average.

In 1898 the river was extraordinarily low all February and March, and though there were plenty of fish they would not take.

In 1899 ten fish were got in February, but it was again a bad year.

In 1900 thirty fish were got in February and March.

The Lee flies are not dressed on any size over 4/0 Limerick hooks, 1/2 being the usual one. The favourites are the Blue and Yellow or the Lee Blue, Grey and Yellow or Yellow Anthony, Grey and Brown, Claret Palmer, Blue, Grey, and Yellow Orangeman, Blue Jock Scot, Dunkeld,

POUL LANE, NETTLEVILLE

THE "HALF HOLE," NETTLEVILLE

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and the Commander. Annexed are the dressings of the four best:—

THE LEE BLUE

Tag. Silver twist, yellow floss.

Tail. Topping and Indian crow.

Body. Light blue seal's fur or mohair, silver tinsel, blue hackle all the way up, bright yellow hackle at shoulder.

Wing. Mixed of gold pheasant ruff and tail, brown mallard, wood duck, yellow and red swan, blue macaw feelers, but a spare wing in spite of its many component parts, and, like all the Irish flies, so short as not to come below the bend of the hook.

THE YELLOW ANTHONY

Tag. Silver twist, yellow floss.

Tail. Topping and Indian crow.

Body. Grey monkey fur, silver tinsel, grey hackle all the way up, bright yellow hackle at shoulder.

Wing. Same as Lee Blue.

This fly is generally dressed on a large-sized hook. Personally we prefer it with a topping or two over all.

THE ORANGEMAN

Tag. Silver twist, dark orange floss.

Tail. As above.

Body. Two turns of blue, orange, green, and grey seal's fur, silver tinsel, graduated hackles to match the body colours, orange hackle at shoulder.

Wing. Much the same as Lee Blue, only made rather brighter by a few more strands of dyed swan.

These dressings are all from patterns made by William Haynes & Sons, 63 Patrick Street, Cork. They will kill on all the rivers running into the sea between Wexford and Kinsale, and on many a Scotch river also, for one of the best fish we ever got was taken from the Dupplin Reserved Water of the Perthshire Earn by a very small Claret Palmer.

The Commander is not as yet a well-known fly on the Lee, being a recent invention of a ghillie in the employ of Mr. R. Welch-Thornton, but as it is that rare thing, a very killing fly in clear, low water, it is worth remembering :—

Tag. Silver twist, orange floss.

Tail. Topping.

Body. Light brown floss, silver tinsel, blue hackle from tail upwards, yellow hackle at shoulder.

Wing. A few fibres of yellow and red swan, with the red feathers from tail of cock pheasant over them—about equal quantities of each.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

Size from 0 downwards.

For all information as to any anglings in the market on the Blackwater, Lee, or Bandon, the angler cannot do better than to apply to William and Samuel Haynes.

Baits are freely used and freely taken on the Lee. Up till the middle of March the stone loach is the most killing, and then prawn, worms, and spoons each have their days.

It will be seen that if the Lee only got fair play it would be one of the best spring rivers in Ireland. Here, again, what we have said about the Liffey and Dublin comes in with double emphasis, for Cork is probably a far

CARRIGROHANE

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richer city than the capital, even as the Lee is a far finer salmon river than the Liffey.

But yet here is a river offering splendid sport to a large body of wealthy merchant gentlemen, and it is allowed to go to ruin for want of a few hundreds of pounds. If we had a business in Cork producing £10,000 a year we would certainly do the whole thing ourselves, always provided we could rent a fine stretch of both banks ; but that accomplished, then we should be only too pleased to know we had, in the pursuit of sport for ourselves, been the means of providing the same for others. Mr. Alderman Dale of that city, a keen angler, who has taken great interest in the welfare of the river, when giving his evidence to the Fishery Commissioners, estimated the Lee anglings at the present to be worth £1000 a year, while declaring his firm conviction that if the poaching of all sorts was suppressed, that then they would be worth fully £5000 a season.

The Lee is usually very clear, and quickly becomes fishable after a flood, so that in an entire season there would probably not be half a dozen days on which angling would be stopped. Some big fish are got every year up to 30 lb., while on the 2nd of February, 1902, Mr. Samuel Haynes had the luck to land one of 45 lb.—length, 49 in. ; girth, 33 in.—while on another occasion, some years ago, he and his father took seven salmon and six grilse in a day.

As the above-mentioned whopper was caught on a Sunday, it is a good exemplification of the old saying, " The better the day the better the deed," although, when mentioning the feat to an old Scotch keeper friend, he held both hands aloft in holy horror, while exclaiming, " O Gawd, the eeneequity of it ! "

CHAPTER XI

The Bandon

With a catchment area of two hundred and thirty-four square miles, and a course of forty-five miles, in which it receives about one hundred and fifty miles of tributary streams, rises in the extreme west of County Cork from the eastern slopes of some desolate hills, whose western declivities discharge their waters into Bantry Bay. Passing by Dunmanway, Ballyneen, and Bandon, at each of which places there are fair hotels, it meets the tide at Innishannon, there forming a narrow estuary extending towards the sea for eleven miles, and eventually finding salt water in Kinsale Harbour.

This river has fallen off in a more marked degree than the neighbouring ones, but it is not such a large stream as the Lee or the Blackwater, and there is no doubt that the smaller the river the sooner will want of protection, coupled with over-netting, bring it to a nearly fishless state.

The long, narrow estuary is netted by about thirty-five seine-nets, which is many more than such a small river can fairly stand. These nets pay no rent, so that anyone can start a boat who pays the £3 licence, a state of affairs displaying the most extraordinary indifference on the part of the riparian owners. Then practically the fish have no weekly close times, for spring fish are slow swimmers, and

those that run as the close time commences are not above Innishannon Bridge by the time the nets begin work again.

Though drift-nets have been declared illegal, the protection funds are so small that the Conservators are not able to hinder their surreptitious use, with regard to which Mr. Moreton Frewen's hatchery manager, F. Stenning, mentioned to the Fishery Commissioners a remarkable state of affairs prevailing at Kinsale, where the men of the Naval Reserve, when coming for their training, are in the habit of bringing drift-nets, with which they poach salmon at all opportunities. Also the shores of Kinsale Harbour are poached by trammel-nets set at night, or by others that are professedly netting for sea fish. Again, in the river itself spurge-poisoning is frequent, while fish are gaffed in large numbers from the tributaries before they have spawned. Of late years the poachers have found out a better method of using spurge, and now, instead of putting it in a bag and churning it with their feet after it has been placed in position, they gather roots and all, and crushing them in a turnip-cutter, the juice is collected as it falls through into soda-water bottles, which can be chucked into the river without fear of detection.

With regard to the massacre of fish in the tributaries, Mr. Frank M'Cotter stated to the Commissioners he was confident that fully 1500 fish were annually killed from the small streams within a radius of ten miles from where he lived; that one man had told him he always took about 150 fish each season out of one small stream; while in a particular village every house in its long main street was well stocked with salted fish taken in the spawning season.

Fines have proved absolutely useless to put a stop to

CARRIGHADRHOID CASTLE AND BRIDGE

A SALMON WEIR ON THE BANDON

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poisoning or killing fish on the spawning beds, and the only way to stamp out these lawless proceedings is to make them punishable by imprisonment without the option of a fine. In 1892 there were ninety-three rod licences issued, which had fallen to sixty in 1899, while as the rods diminished the nets increased from twenty-five to thirty-three, a certain proof that they were making good profits.

The river opens on the 15th of February for the rod, the nets following on the 1st of March, while the former continue to be plied to the 12th of October, and the latter cease work on the 15th of August. It would be better for the fish if nets and rods alike commenced on the 1st of March, while the open time for the rods should certainly end with September, and even earlier would be better. The Earl of Bandon, together with many other of the riparian owners, are very clear as to the injury done by the rods during the first fortnight of the season; for though a by-law has just been made which forbids the carrying of a gaff before the 15th of March, up till recently it was the custom for anglers to keep all kelts they landed, so much so that many local fishers took out a rod licence only to make money by catching kelts and selling them at 4d. a pound to the Bandon fishmongers, who dealt in them openly.

There is also in Ireland a curious creature haunting the banks of almost all the large rivers of the south, viz. the fish huckster, generally accompanied by a donkey-cart and scales. He has a wonderful knack of turning up as soon as a fish has been landed, and then and there we have been offered 2s. a pound for a fresh-run February fish, and 4d. a pound for kelts, while it was good fun to watch the expression of the old man's face when he happened to see

one returned to the river. For those who fish to sell, the system has its advantages; but as it is a great encouragement to poaching, we should like to see these gentry suppressed, or at any rate duly licensed.

The Earl of Bandon, who has a twenty-five years' experience, used to kill in the eighties from fifty to sixty fish each season to his own rod, which, considering the extent of water he owns, is nothing wonderful. Since 1885, however, this gradually fell to five or six a season. In 1899 he only had three, and up to the 1st of May 1900 the total was one fish !

The first eleven miles of the river from its source are all open fishing, which twenty years ago was the best part for May sport, for there are several small streams that form a narrow, deep lake, from which one rod has had as many as nine in a day. Lately the total take on this eleven miles has been five fish, which is so bad that, though open to the public, it is rare to see a rod on it.

Mr. H. D. Conner owns what should be a fine bit of angling in the Manch and Carrigmore Fishery, extending for fully two miles on both banks, and holding fourteen pretty casts, easily reached dry-shod by a sixteen-foot rod, though sometimes waders are used. Here, some time ago, Mr. W. Haynes and his son had thirteen fish between them in a day.

Also at Woodlands Mr. J. A. Allman has a pretty reach of one and a half miles of the north bank, which he keeps in his own hands. Here in July, August, and September there are also sea trout to be had, the best flies being Carter's Favourite, Quin's Fancy, Orange and Grouse, Silver Rail, and Orange and Blue.

THE BANDON AT INNISHANNON BRIDGE

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During August and September the sea-trouting on the lower waters is pretty good, as from a dozen to three dozen may be got in a day above Innishannon and in the tidal water below, three-quarters of a pound being the average weight.

From the opening day to the end of May is the best angling time if there were fish. The flies that are used on the Lee are good here, only dressed on smaller hooks. To these may be added the Blue Grey and Brown, with the Golden Olive, both of them fine patterns from Haynes, which could be put over any water with confidence. It is a shame such pretty creations should be known only by the colours of their bodies, so we venture to suggest that the former might be christened "The Cork Beauty," and the latter "The Butterman." Here are the correct robes in which they should be brought to the baptismal font:—

THE CORK BEAUTY

Tag. Silver twist, orange floss.

Tail. Topping.

Body. Three turns of blue seal, two of monkey fur, one of fiery brown seal, silver tinsel; over each of these colours are hackles to match, the shoulder one to be more of a dark claret than fiery brown.

Wing. Gold pheasant ruff, bustard, mallard, fibres of wood duck, blue and yellow swan.

THE BUTTERMAN

Tag. Silver twist, claret floss.

Tail. Topping and Indian crow.

Body. Rich olive seal's fur, gold tinsel, hackle to match body, claret hackle at shoulder.

Wing. Same as Cork Beauty.

It will therefore be seen that the Bandon as it is at present offers but small inducement to anyone to go out of his way to visit it; albeit, if well stocked, it would be a most pleasant river to cast, for it moves at a brisk pace, while pools and streams are in plenty.

CHAPTER XII

The Arragideen

A short stream of about twenty miles in length, meets the tide at Timoleague, to fall into the Atlantic at Courtmacsherry Bay. This pretty little river is, alas! one of the numerous "have beens" of this coast, for though it formerly gave good sport with salmon and sea trout, of late years spurge, gaffs, and illegal netting at the mouth have nearly completed their work of extermination, and, as far as angling goes, the fish are practically wiped out. It is netted from the 1st of March to the 31st of August, while it seems a farce to mention that the rod may be plied from the 15th of February to the 31st of October. Under these circumstances, it is not necessary to dwell for long on this little stream, and so we will hurry on to the next one, in which, however, sport is only a trifle better.

The Ilen is a swift-running mountain stream of about twenty miles in length, which falls at Skibbereen into Baltimore Bay, a sea lough of the Atlantic. It is a late river, in which the run takes place in July and August, the nets starting on the 1st of May and working to the end of September, while the rods may begin on the 1st of February and fish on to the 31st of October.

Though thirty years ago one rod could get from forty to fifty fish a season, the total captures of the last five

years barely come to as many, and in the so-called "good" season of 1898 only fourteen were got. The whole of the funds available for preservation are less than £60, and as it was found impossible to procure efficient bailiffs with such small funds, it was resolved to spend the money in "pitching" the pools, *i.e.* in placing obstacles in them so that they could not be netted. This plan worked well for a few years; and as long as there was plenty of water the fish were safe, as at such times spurge is useless. Then came the railway, when the poachers, quickly learning the use of dynamite, proceeded to use it in all the protected pools; then as soon as the water became low at the end of August, or early in September, spurge was poured into the pools which had not been "pitched" by the bucketful, the proprietors standing tamely by and making no efforts to preserve their property, the fish becoming so nearly extinct that the poachers had perforce to cease work, simply because there was nothing left to catch.

Of course the fifteen nets in the narrow estuary (many more than the capabilities of the river can provide for) quickly felt the effects of this wholesale massacre, for, as will be seen below, the takes of those working in the several fishery of Mr. John Beamish fell to nearly nil. They yielded in—

	Salmon.	Sea Trout.
1892	682	248
1893	42	1401
1895	141	lost
1897	62	70
1898	22	106
1899	14	5

But in this last year netting was discontinued when the season was about half-way through, as it did not pay.

Experts have expressed an opinion that it takes four or five years before the poisoning of the upper waters of a river makes itself felt by a reduction of the netting returns, which is fully confirmed in the case of the Ilen, for the very bad seasons on it correspond in all instances with the dates of the wholesale poisonings of the river.

There are still a few sea trout to be caught, for, strange to say, they run earlier than do the salmon ; often putting in an appearance in April, and spawning quite early, they return to the sea as August commences. Thus they escape the deadly spurge, which is seldom resorted to before the end of that month, and it is for this reason only that they are not as scarce as salmon.

On leaving Skibbereen we will make our way to Kenmare and the Roughty River. It should, however, be mentioned that there are some pretty little streams falling into Bantry Bay, all of which, when "just right," hold a few salmon and more sea trout, though not so many of either as they ought.

Of these, the Four Mile Water—which, by the way, is nine miles long—falls into the head of Dunmanus Bay, some five miles to the south of Bantry.

To the north of that little town at short intervals come the Mealagh, eleven miles in length ; the Owvane, thirteen miles ; the Coomhola, ten miles ; then, passing round the head of the bay, there are the smaller streams of Glengarriff and Adrigole, falling in on the north shore.

Again keeping round the coast past Bearhaven and turning up Kenmare River, as the lengthy salt-water Lough is called, there are numerous streams of only a few miles in length, which hold sea trout in times of flood—none of them worth going out of one's way for, all of them

charming angling if one happens to be visiting within reach of them just when they are in order.

The Roughty River rises in the wild hills on the borders of Cork and Kerry, not perhaps more than ten miles from the source of the Lee as the crow flies, and after a rough-and-tumble course of about twenty miles falls into the head of Kenmare River a little to the east of the town of the same name. For many years it has been poisoned, while, as any fish that come up later in the autumn are speared and salted for Christmas fare, hardly any ever find their way back to the sea. Unfortunately, there are so many riparian owners, all holding different views, that it is seemingly a hopeless matter to try and get them to combine to protect the river, though, were this done, then the angling rent would be considerable. Some parts of it are open, but not a great extent, and leave has to be asked ; while here it may be mentioned that in this district Mrs. Mahony, of Dromore Castle, lets her fishing on the Blackwater, and Lord Lansdowne also lets some of his on the Sheen with " The Falls " shootings.

The Sheen, a rapid stream of fourteen miles in length, winds its way through the valleys of the hills rising at the back of Glengarriff, to fall into the same estuary as the Roughty, only on the south shore of the bay. The whole of it belongs to Lord Lansdowne, who lets to Mr. R. Conway Dobbs the six lowest miles of the river together with the netting at the mouth.

Both the Sheen and the Roughty are late rivers, the run being in June and July, while fish average from 8 lb. to 10 lb. They open for nets and rods on the 1st of April and close for the former on the 15th of September and for the latter on the 31st of October. When in order, the Sheen

is a much better river for sport than the Roughty, as Lord Lansdowne and his tenant go shares in employing four keepers on the six miles of river; but in spite of that, cases of spurge-poisoning will now and then occur, for on the 9th of July 1897 Mr. Dobbs took 110 poisoned fish, ranging from 7 lb. up to 19 lb., out of one pool! Here are the returns of the fish caught by Mr. Dobbs' draft-net worked during June, July, and the first week in August :—

1894	753
1895	638
1896	452
1897	423
1898	208
1899	338

Although the beauties of the country and the comforts of the Southern Hotel at Kenmare may well tempt the angler to linger in this neighbourhood if angling permission be got, yet this must always be a better district for residents than it is for visitors, for the streams being dependent on floods, the stranger never can tell when they may come, while the native, who is always on the spot, is ever ready to take advantage of every rainfall.

About seven miles to the west of Kenmare, the Blackwater, or Dromore River, flowing from the small lake of Brin, in the hills to the south of Macgillycuddy's Reeks, after a rapid run of ten miles falls into the north shore of Kenmare Bay close to Dromore Castle, belonging to Mrs. Mahony. It is a brilliant example of the benefits to be derived from the expenditure of the money necessary to provide really strict preservation and a small hatchery, for, while the takes from the Sheen, but seven miles away, have fallen off year by year, the returns from the Dromore have largely increased.

The hatchery, which was started about thirty years ago, was the first one put up in Kerry; it cost but £15, and stands on the side of the high road without ever having been interfered with. It turns out about 100,000 young fish each year, which are distributed in the small streams running into the main river as soon as the umbilical sac is absorbed. Also, in order to increase the spawning area, a passage into the lake has been made by blasting, assisted by a little inexpensive engineering, up which fish easily pass even into the small stream at the head of the lake.

The close times are the same as those of the Roughty and Sheen, but, in the opinion of those best able to judge, they badly want altering, and it would be greatly to the advantage of these rivers with the others of the district if netting ceased on the 1st instead of the 15th of September, and angling on the 1st instead of the 31st of October.

As well illustrating the difference between really good preservation, moderate, and none, the following statistics of poisoning in the three rivers are remarkable. In the ten years from 1890 to 1899, while the Roughty was poisoned sixty-one times and the Sheen twenty-four times, only once did such a calamity overtake the Blackwater! It must not be lost sight of that in every case of spurge its action destroys three crops of fish—viz. the salmon that have come out of the sea, together with the par and the fry in the river. Thus small wonder the Roughty is nearly fishless; and truly it is high time this cowardly, skulking method of poaching was met by a severer punishment than a mere fine.

Continuing our way to the sea, some ten miles to the west of the Dromore the Sneem falls into the harbour of the same name, a short hill river, well preserved by private

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THE CURRANE WEIR

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hands, holding salmon and sea trout, with the same close times as the adjacent rivers. If permission be obtained, then the Park-na-silla Hotel, only a few miles away, offers the angler unusual luxury with pleasant society. Continuing our way round this wild coast, we will push on to Waterville and Lough Currane, some ten miles from the railway at Cahirciveen. Here there is the choice of three good hotels—the Bay View, the Butler Arms, and the Southern—all of which have boats on Lough Currane, the charge being from 8s. to 10s. a day for the boat and two men, which does not include their lunch or whisky. A stay at any of these pleasant quarters can be made at the rate of three guineas a week for board and lodging; while the Bay View has for additional attraction the exclusive angling of the Cummeragh River, with also a portion of the Inny River, of which about another two miles goes with the Butler Arms. With regard to the Cummeragh, the rods are limited to two, unless it is previously agreed that a third may join.[1]

Excepting the Sligo River, the Currane is the only other one in Ireland that opens on the 1st of January. It belongs to Mr. James Butler, who has a several fishery of the whole of the river and half a mile to seawards of the mouth. He and his ancestors have kept records of takes dating back to 1805, during which period sundry experimental dips with the net have been made as early as the end of November, when perfectly clean-run fish were caught, only to be duly returned. The river is but some quarter of a mile in length, and about midway to the sea there is a fixed weir having two killing hatches in it, with unusually prolonged weekly close times, as they are only fished seventy-two hours each

[1] These arrangements are subject to frequent alterations.

week; for, ceasing work at 12 p.m. on Fridays, they do not commence again until 12 p.m. on Mondays, so small wonder that Lough Currane is often well stocked, the more so that in June 1897 a friendly arrangement was come to between Mr. Butler and those interested in the success of the angling for the non-working of his seine-net in the sea, in which he formerly used to mesh fully 1000 June and July fish each season, the greater part of which should find their way into Lough Currane and its tributaries.

It is chiefly anglers who keep the Waterville hotels going, and each season there are about 140 rod licences issued in Waterville only, and independent of other visitors who arrive with a licence taken out in Dublin or elsewhere.

Outside the half-mile limit there are several sets of seine-net boats, with crews of sixteen men, who of course keep their catch a secret; but Mr. Butler, who has the best opportunities of judging, estimates it at 1500 fish a season at the very least. Also with regard to the fluctuations in the takes of sea trout, he ascribes the increase to the fact that for a few years the mackerel boats to a great extent ceased work, while as soon as they resumed operations and became more numerous the takes of sea trout immediately declined, the mackerel nets capturing them in the sea. Mr. Butler also has a theory that these nets hunt away large quantities of salmon from the coast, for in one stretch they cover three or four miles of water, and his idea is that fish, when knocking their noses against a succession of these walls of twine, quickly take the hint, and, turning out to sea again, eventually enter other streams.

We believe this is the only river in Ireland where

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a force of Constabulary is employed for protection purposes with the express sanction of Dublin headquarters, the Conservators finding barracks, fire, and light for the two months of the spawning season. It was in 1896 that the Constabulary first made their appearance, the poachers themselves bringing it about by their very lawlessness; for though they did not resort to poison, only because the spurge supply is scanty, it was the custom for them to go out at night in gangs of from twenty to thirty, and, armed with spears, gaffs, and nets, they carried all before them; and there can hardly be a doubt that the destruction by them six or seven years ago of nearly all the spawning fish has a great deal to do with the scarcity at the present time. Then several of the bailiffs were killed, while others were brutally maimed for life, until matters came to such a climax that the Dublin authorities sent eight Constabulary men to restore order, who, in conjunction with the water bailiffs, have eventually broken up these gangs, though not without some desperate affrays. At the present time, however, thanks to them, Lough Currane with its tributaries are fairly well protected.

Mr. Butler has also recently started a hatchery, which turns out about 130,000 fry, the Currane fish having been crossed with some from the Rhine, in the expectation of increasing their size.

In the early part of the century the open time for nets was from the 1st of January to the end of September, while the weekly slap was only twenty-four hours; but at that time there were no boats fishing outside the half-mile limit, nor any on the lough. In 1827 the wholesale price of March salmon was 8d. a pound, which fell to 4d. in May and 3d. in June.

At the present time the open season is from the 1st of January to the 15th of July, a shortening of no less than two and a half months, while the weekly close time is seventy-two hours instead of twenty-four; and yet in the old days there were more fish than there are now, while as for present-day prices Mr. Butler states that his father has had as much as 10s. a pound for early January fish, and that he himself usually gets 5s. 6d. a pound from the fishmonger, and he dryly remarks, "At that price I would rather be selling than consuming."

This fishery yielded in—

	Salmon.	Sea Trout.
1805	1567	1197
1811	498	no record.
1813	521	,,
1825	2002	3013
1826	687	8827

which makes it evident that even in the good old days there were very great fluctuations. Then from 1858 the records are continuous, and, coming to recent times, in the ten years from 1888 to 1897 the average from the river and the weir was 708 fish per season, while in the ten years from 1887 to 1896 the sea nets inside the limit gave an average return of 1025 fish. In 1897 the sea nets were bought off and ceased to work, when the return from only the river and weir fell in 1898 to 511, and in 1899 to 348 salmon.

With regard to white trout, in the six years from 1890 to 1895 the sea nets of Mr. Butler took an average of 2713 per season. So therefore, if the run is the same in the future, then, provided there is no poaching, the greater part of it should come to Lough Currane. This lough is some four and a half miles long by two and a half in width,

with a circumference of about nine miles, its shores being full of delightful bays, many of which are fringed with arbutus. It has a curious history, and had it been situated in Scotland or in England, it would have proved a small gold-mine to the seven or eight proprietors who own its shores. Luckily, however, for Waterville and the angling public, the riparian owners, by their inertia and by lapse of time, have suffered their angling to drift into public property. For there is no doubt that, in proportion to its size, the lough might be made to return nearly as large an income as Loch Tay did in its palmiest days, for, had the boats on it been limited to eight, there are any number of fishers who would have been glad to give £5 a week for one, and to pay the boatmen and give them their lunch as well. At such a rate £40 a week could have surely been reckoned on for the first four months of each season, which represents £680 ; in addition to that, as the salmon ceased to run, and grilse and sea trout commenced to do so, the eight boats could easily have been let at a reduced rate of £3 a week from the 1st of July, which would have brought in another £404. Thus the bank owners, supposing there are eight of them, and each with just the same length of shore, would have had an income of £125 apiece, instead of getting nothing at all, as is the case at present ; but no ! they were supine to a degree, and unable to decide on vigorous action in combination with each other, so now it would take a deal of hard fighting in the law courts, involving the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, ere the public could be ousted.

From the opening of the rod season on the 1st of February to the end of it, on the 15th of October, the twelve square miles of the lough are daily fished to death

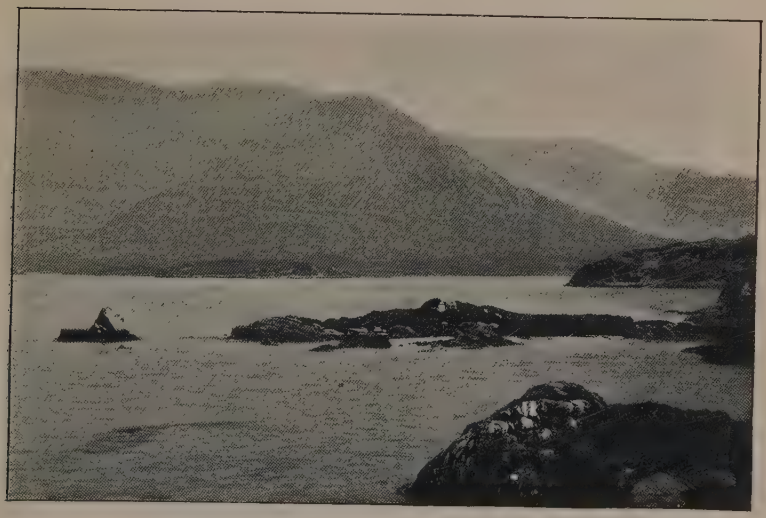
by about twenty-five boats; for it is as free to residents and professional fishermen as it is to visitors. Loch Tay, which is sixteen miles long by one in width, with an area of two hundred and fifty-six square miles, is only fished by twenty boats, which are very seldom all out on the same day, and Currane is a regular case of "too many cooks."

There are two seasons in the lake, viz. from the opening day to the end of May, and then from about the 20th of June, when grilse and sea trout begin to run, to the end of the season. In the eighties it was a common thing for Currane to yield from two to five fish a day to the five or six boats that then fished it; but now, if one boat gets three in a week, it is thought good. As late as 1894 it was stated in the Kerry *Evening Post* that the anglers of that season had taken from the lake and its tributaries 659 salmon, 3000 sea trout, and 4000 brown trout; and though the writer did not give facts to corroborate his statement, it may nevertheless be fairly correct, for Mr. Butler vouches for it that one professional angler had killed over 100 fish to his own rod in one season.

Fish weigh from 8 lb. to 15 lb., grilse 4 lb., and sea trout about 1 lb., while salmon seldom rise to a fly until near the end of April, nearly all captures prior to that being made with spinning lures. Both natural and artificial are used, the former more often than not consisting of par from the nearest burn.

In recent years, although the lake has been plentifully stocked, the angling has not been so good as of old, and this was especially the case in 1899, when no lure could be hit on which was able to take a tithe of the fish that swarmed in the lake. The local professionals put this down to the large number of boats incessantly fishing the lake, and to

THE HATCHERY AT WATERVILLE



LOUGH CURRANE

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its occupants having become accustomed to the falsity of the lures; and the idea was that if anyone could invent some fresh lure that the fish had never seen, that then they would seize it freely until they had learnt to class the new charm with the deceitfulness of the old ones.

The chief feeder to the lake, the Cummeragh River, falls in on the north shore, draining the loughs of Cloonaghlin, Namona, and Deriana, and several smaller ones, all of which are good for autumn sport, especially with sea trout. The river itself is some four miles in length, of which only two miles is worth much for angling. The upper one flows over a rocky bed, while the lower one passes through a swamp, and is mostly a narrow, dead stretch of water, in which, however, fish often lie.

On the eastern shore of Currane there is also a short stream entering from Lough Isknagahiny, both of them giving good sport with sea trout after a September flood.

There is one good pool with three smaller ones and some odd corners in the Currane River, which fish from both sides. Mr. Butler usually keeps the angling in his own hands, but occasionally lets it for short periods or at a charge of 10s. a day if he is away. It is just a pretty beat for one rod; the spring fish do not, however, halt for long, but hurry into the lough, and the best time for the river is from the middle of June to the middle of October, in which period there are plenty of grilse and sea trout. There is an early run of heavy sea trout which go up to 7 lb.; the summer run, scaling from 1 lb. to 2 lb., sometimes gives splendid sport in the evening just before dusk to *very* small flies on fine-drawn gut—but it requires an expert!

The Waterville spring fishing is supposed to end with April—up to that date in 1911, February gave 19 fish,

March 52, and April 27, or a total of 98. In 1912 February gave 10 fish, March only 12, and April 9, or a total of only 31 fish in three months!

A few miles to the north of Waterville the Inny, a pretty mountain stream with a course of sixteen miles, flows over fine white and firm sand into Ballinskelligs Bay; and, close as its mouth is to that of the Currane with its January fish, it is a remarkable fact that the Inny is never visited by clean fish until the end of June.

Owing to slack preservation, it is badly poached, or it would be a fine little stream for the summer angler; while, even as matters are, it is not to be despised, as during the first few floods after the nets come off it will often give a fish or two and a basket of sea trout.

Netting commences on the 1st of May and continues up to the 30th of September, which is fully a month too late, as by that date the fish are black and nearly valueless. The rod season is fixed even more strangely, as it commences on the 1st of February and continues until the 15th of October. Why this little stream should be declared open to the angler at such an early date, when no clean fish come into it until about five months later, is indeed a remarkable instance of how not to do it. Perhaps the authorities wished to give the natives a chance of catching kelts and keeping them, or perhaps we are wrong in our dates, although they are correct according to the Dublin Castle close-time list.

The best salmon flies for Currane lake or river are exactly alike so far as body and wing are concerned, the difference being solely in the hackles. Sizes from 5 to 2 Limerick hooks. Four tied by Messrs. Haynes of Cork lie before us as we write; they are as follows:—

1. *Tag.* Gold twist, orange floss.

Tail. Topping with a few strands of gold pheasant ruff.

Body. Rich brown mohair, gold tinsel, brown hackle from tail upwards, grouse hackle at shoulder.

Wing. A few strands of gold pheasant ruff and tail, brown mallard over them, blue macaw feelers.

Head. Black ostrich herl.

2. The variations consist in the substitution of a dark claret hackle with blue jay at shoulder.

3. Two turns alternately of dark claret and medium blue hackle, with a grouse hackle at shoulder.

4. Claret hackle, with grouse at shoulder.

The sea trout flies for Waterville are best tied on hooks of sizes 11 or 10, though these are somewhat smaller than the natives use, most of them having yet to learn that small flies with fine gut are more killing than big ones and coarse tackle.

We will now take our departure from Waterville, though not without having a parting chat with Tim McCarthy, where we replenish our stock of flies before starting for the Carragh or Caragh River, flowing from the lough of the same name. We put up at the Southern Hotel Company's pretty house on the shore of the lake, for with it goes the angling on the river from the lake to the sea.

The Caragh flows from the western spurs of the Macgillycuddy Reeks, and after a short run is joined by the Owenroe, which empties the small loughs of Reagh and Cloon. From this junction it has a further run of a few miles before it expands into Lough Caragh, some six miles in length, on leaving which, after a further run of a short two miles, it falls into the sea at Rossbeigh Creek, an arm of Dingle Bay.

It is an early river, netting commencing on the 17th of January and ending on the 31st of July. Strange to relate, the rods do not begin until the 1st of February, and continue to the 15th of October, one of the very few instances where the netters commence work before the anglers. This close time was fixed with the express object of saving spent fish from capture or injury by rod fishers; but surely the whole of the Caragh kelts have not dropped down to the sea in the fifteen days that intervene between the 17th of January and the 1st of February! We believe these dates will shortly be altered, and that rods and nets will start together on the 17th of January, while the angling season will be curtailed by fourteen days, and end on the 1st of October, a wise alteration which would save the lives of many ready to spawn fish.

The Caragh River, from the lake to the sea, is a fine piece of angling with nine ideal pools, the only drawback being that as a spate runs off all too quickly, constant showers are wanted to keep it in order for long. Its brown trout are not worth thinking about, as they are small and black, though the lakes at the head of the river, easily reached from Mrs. Breen's hotel at Glencar, yield real good baskets of brownies running up to 1 lb. and more. This hotel has also the salmon fishing of the upper river between Cloon, to which salmon ascend, and Caragh Lake, as well as boats on the last-named sheet of water. Salmon fishing on the lake and lower river is over by the end of April, though grilse and sea trout run in June and July.

The Southern Hotel Company have put up a hatchery at Caragh, and protect their own special stretch of angling; but they are powerless to cope with the poaching of the spawning fish in the winter, or to stop the poisoning of

LOUGH CARAGH

A GOOD CAST ON LOUGH LEANE

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the pools in summer when the water is low, for which purpose lime is used in these districts, as spurge does not grow.

Lough Caragh has several proprietors, the largest being Lord Lansdowne and the Macgillycuddy. The best flies for its sea trout are dressed on hooks two sizes larger than the Currane ones, bright, showy little fellows, such as Orange and Grouse, Claret and Mallard, Black and Bustard, Claret and Blue, Grey and Starling, Yellow and Mallard. The brown trout of the lake that rise to the fly are only the small sort, which rarely go over half a pound, and it is only by trolling that the large ones are caught, while also nearly all the salmon are taken in the same way, though on the lower part of the river they rise freely to the fly. The Waterville killers are but of little use here, the four best being the Grey Jay, Fiery Brown, Blue Grey, and Jay, Half Blue and Half Brown; and if to these be added the Yellow Anthony, then the Caragh, the Laune, and the Flesk may be fished with confidence. Sizes from 6 to 3 Limerick hooks. These patterns also come from Messrs. Haynes, and have been proved to be good killers by Mr. S. Haynes, a keen angler, who has fished the whole of the Kerry rivers and lakes with great success.

In April 1891 a gentleman fishing the lower river had a somewhat remarkable experience, for after he had hooked two fish in rapid succession, each of them abruptly departed the richer by a fly attached to a portion of the casting line. Then a short time afterwards another angler came along spinning a minnow, and fouling the remnant of line attached to the first fish he duly landed it, while later on, when using a worm, he caught the second fish with the broken gut and fly still fast in his mouth.

From this it will be seen that all lures are allowed. The number of rods is not limited, but the hotel imposes a small charge of 2s. a day on each.

With regard to the names of the Irish salmon flies, it has always appeared to us remarkable that there are not more of them in the list of the christened ones.

All the standard Scotch flies are named. A Jock Scot is a hard-and-fast production, with feathers, tinsel, and silk accurately defined from head to tail. Now if, following the Irish principle, one were to write to Farlow in London, Hardy in Alnwick, to Haynes in Cork and Malloch in Perth, and order a " Black and Yellow " from each, it would be interesting to see what sort of productions would be sent; yet " Black and Yellow " would be the name of our dearly loved Jock had he happened to have been born on the Shannon instead of on the Tweed. All over Ireland many of the standard flies are known only by the colours of their bodies, and only to the initiated are they recognisable. A Grey Jay means one with a grey body and jay hackle at shoulder, a Half Blue and Half Brown is one with the lower half of the body blue and the upper one brown; but in both instances the nature of the tinsel, tail, wing, and head are left to the taste and imagination of the fly-dresser. Let anyone write to Londonderry, Belfast, Dublin, Cork, or Castleconnell for one of these flies, and though the bodies will be alike in each, not one of the five will be uniform in other respects.

It would be presumptuous for us to suggest names for flies to Irishmen, who are renowned all the world over for their fluent and ready wit, so we will only venture to point out, in case they are at a loss, that their country has provided them with plenty of brilliant names which

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will serve as pegs to hang flies on. The Lord Lieutenant, the Londonderry, the Donoughmore, the Mayo, the Massy, the Dunsandle, the Lurgan, the Greville, etc., are all names held by wielders of the rod; then we might have the Shamrock, the Land Leaguer, the Fenian, the Redmond, the Traitor, the Poacher, and the Jailer—for it is better, we are sure, to call a fly by the best or worst of names than to call it nothing at all!

On leaving Caragh, a run of ten minutes in the train will land us at the Station Hotel in Killorglin, at the mouth of what ought to be one of the best rivers in Ireland, viz. the Laune, which, in its short run of fourteen miles, drains three hundred and twenty square miles of country, including Lough Leane with the other Killarney lakes—a rapid-running, ideal stream for the rod, for its large lake reservoirs keep it in good angling ply for from ten to twenty days after a flood, and while its waters are rarely so dirty as to be unfishable, it rushes through a wild stretch so destitute of trees and shrubs as to make casting delightfully easy.

From where it leaves the Lower Lake of Killarney—or Lough Leane, as it should more correctly be called—it has a run of about ten miles before meeting the tide some three miles above Killorglin. In this distance there are upwards of sixty named casts, the best of them being Bunloe, Columms, Bridge Stream, Poulnahalla, Castle Pool, Castle Point, Broders Inch, Collinanodes, Breen's Stream, Strand Pool, and Annadale.

The river is open for nets from the 17th of January to the 31st of July, the rods commencing on the 1st of February and continuing until the 31st of October, which is just about a month longer than ought to be allowed. Anyway, it would be a distinct improvement if the rods

began when the nets started, and then ceased on the 15th of October.

The chief proprietors are Lord Ardilaun of Muckross, Lord Kenmare, and Lord Ventry, and to the last-mentioned peer belongs the several fishery at Killorglin, for many years leased by Messrs. Power and Dodd.

There has existed for a long time a strong feeling on the part of the upper proprietors that the netting season is too prolonged, and that it ought to end on the 30th of June instead of the 31st of July. They say that in the twenty years from 1872 to 1892 the Killorglin nets took 171,708 fish (an average of 8585 a year) as against 27,162 captured by the Killarney nets in the same period (or an average of 1358 a year), and they contend that if the netting season was curtailed by a month it would allow so many more fish to reach the upper waters that the anglings would become really valuable, while as soon as the increase in the number of the spawning beds had had time to bear fruit that then the Killarney nets would also make larger catches. It is the old story : the lower proprietors get the jam, the upper ones the scrapings of the pot, so small wonder they grumble ! We consider, however, that the captures made by the nets of Messrs. Power and Dodd are but as trifles when compared with the takes made in the public waters of the estuary.

Thirty-five years ago there were only twelve or fifteen boats at work in those waters, while now there are from seventy to eighty, all fishing with draft-nets, drawing them to the shore or on to the sandbanks bared by the falling tide. Moreover, in spite of the unrelaxing efforts of Mr. James Hensey, the energetic inspector of the District Fisheries, many of these nets do not observe the weekly

close time, for the water-bailiffs are not in sufficient force to interfere, while the stalwart coastguards, obeying orders, look on and take no notice of the law-breaking. It is quite certain that all these boats make a profit, for otherwise they would not take out a licence, and it is chiefly to their ravages that the great falling-off in the angling is due: to that, and to the poaching of spawners in the upper waters, for very few fish that push up any of the tributaries of the Flesk ever return to the sea.

The licences for this public fishery in the sea are granted by Government at £3 for each boat, and the impression has got about that no matter how numerous the applications it is legally impossible to refuse anyone a licence; but this must surely be a wrong idea, for the Government would not be likely to part with the right to protect its own property. Therefore, wherever public fishings exist, Government should forthwith make an order determining the number of licences to be issued in each district, and the limit should be fixed at a little over the highest number of licences hitherto recorded. If that were done, the public could not complain they had been deprived of anything they had ever had, while it would be highly beneficial to the salmon and the owners of all river fishings.

A law of this kind would go a long way to restore our salmon fisheries, for hitherto river owners who would have started hatcheries on a very large scale have been prevented from so doing by the knowledge that any efforts they might make for the improvement of their properties would, if successful, at once be met by such an increase in the numbers of the public nets as would speedily not only bring matters once more to their old bad state, but might even make them worse than they were before the attempted

improvements. Now, with a limit placed on the numbers of the nets, the river proprietors, at present reduced to passive despair, would doubtlessly take heart again, for they would know the worst they had to face, and they might be fairly confident that if, by means of hatcheries and better preservation of spawning fish, they could send such largely increased numbers of smolts to the sea as would ensure a return of ten times as many grilse as had ever been previously known, that then a large proportion of them must escape the nets, which, with restricted numbers, could only have a limited killing power. It would be much the same as if a score of stags wishing to pass through a narrow gorge leading from one forest to another were to dash by twenty men concealed in it, each being armed with a single-barrel muzzle-loading rifle—only a few would escape to reach their object point. But if a hundred deer made the same move, then so long as the number of the shooters and the effectiveness of their weapons remained the same, sheer force of numbers would enable the bulk of the deer to escape. It would be just the same with the fish. Eighty nets might capture (as they certainly do in the Laune estuary) the bulk of the small run of salmon wishing to enter the river, but if there was a multitude of fish to deal with, then, though the nets would get more than they formerly did, yet they could not possibly take them all, and those that were left would come to the river.

Likewise, if a limit were placed on the number of public nets, we think that those using the estuary of a river worked on the above lines would in course of time make such much larger captures, and consequently become so much better off, that the charge for the licence could

INSPECTOR J. HENSEY, NOTEBOOK IN HAND, STRIPPING, WEIGHING, AND MARKING SALMON AT THE KILLORGLIN HATCHERY

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easily be doubled or perhaps trebled, which would bring in a large accession to the funds of the Conservators.

At the present time there are three hatcheries on the Laune: one capable of taking 200,000 ova, owned by Messrs. Power and Dodd, at Killorglin; the other a small one at Muckross, kept by the Conservators and taking only about 80,000 eggs; and the third a small one at Killarney House. As they are all thoroughly well managed, we have no doubt that they will eventually add to the takes of the public netters or be the means of bringing forward fresh applicants for netting licences, which is not quite the object their founders had in view when they started them, for these hatcheries have now been at work for the last six years, while the salmon have steadily diminished instead of increasing. In our humble opinion, hatcheries will always be useless unless the number of nets be limited. A multitude of gunners will always nearly exterminate the *feræ naturæ* on unpreserved lands. A multitude of nets will as surely nearly wipe out salmon in unpreserved waters. In order to protect our game, we limit the numbers of our gunners; why should we not limit the numbers of our netters?

There are some ten miles of the Laune and several miles of the Flesk which might be turned into very fine angling, which could be let for fully £1000 a season, but as matters are at present the rental is but little more than a tenth of that sum.

Lord Ardilaun, the Laune Angling Association, and Messrs. Power and Dodd have nearly all the angling between Lough Leane and the tideway. Tickets may be purchased in Killarney for either of the two last-named anglings. The Muckross estate has sixteen pools and both banks, the

Association thirteen, and Messrs. Power and Dodd about thirty others, nearly all of which are fished from the bank with a seventeen- or eighteen-foot rod, which in summer may with comfort be discarded for one of sixteen feet; the few pools which want wading can all be cast by the aid of stockings.

There are clean-run fish from the opening day, but the cream of the spring angling is from the middle of March to the end of May. Peal begin to run in June, and may be met with up to the end of the season, though the chief run is in July and August, while July, August, and September are the best sea-trout times. The flies that kill on the Caragh, as already mentioned, will kill here, but those who like a larger selection may add the Half Grey and Half Brown, Blue Claret and Grey, and the Orange Jay. For sea trout very small flies with blue and orange bodies are the favourites. Baits of all sorts are permitted, of which the worm is the best. Salmon average 11½ lb., and grilse 5 lb., while a gaff may be carried from the opening day. Two or three fish a day is now considered *very* good, and even that number in a week is highly thought of. In former times Mr. H. A. Herbert and Lady Pigot had a day of sixteen fish, ranging from 11 lb. to 5 lb., while the late Captain J. Herbert often had half a dozen a day without working very hard; also the late Mr. Charles Johnson had one of 35 lb., which remains the record weight for the river.

The Flesk, which is really the Upper Laune, after a run of twenty-eight miles, falls into Lough Leane a little to the south of Killarney. It is a dashing, rapid stream with some very pretty pools, which, if they only had plenty of occupants, would give the angler fine sport after each fresh from April to the end of the season.

Mr. Cronin Coltsman, the owner of the prettily placed Flesk Castle, three miles out of Killarney, has a very good mile and a half of the left bank, which is at times let with the castle and shootings, there being nine good pools, all of which can be fished dry-shod. March and the three following months are the best ones, but sad to relate that, instead of the average take ranging from 80 to 100 fish, as it should do, it now varies from ten to twenty according to the season.

For those who like catching salmon from a boat, Lough Leane, if there were only a few more fish in it, would offer the very perfection of the sport, for it is at its best just as the weather is also at its best, viz. in May and June, while the lake itself is the most beautiful sheet of water in the world, and, my word! what a splendid lunch a ten-pound fish will make for three if it be cut into six thick slices, through each of which is run a freshly peeled stick of arbutus wood to serve as a spit while it grills over a fierce but clear fire of the same scented wood. What a delicious flavour that arbutus skewer and smoke gives to the brown smoking salmon steak, while the "Guinness" that washes it down is nectar for the gods. In those days anything under a ten-pounder amongst three was voted short commons; but that, alas! is forty years ago, and in later days we must admit that our appetite, like unto the salmon supply, has "declined."

In those days, in spite of all advice, we used to fish the lake (from the Victoria Hotel) most successfully for trout with the very smallest English flies, such as the March Brown, the Duns, and the Wickham Fancy, in all of which expeditions we were our own boatmen, though often warned that if we got caught out in the open

by a gale from the west there would be danger of an upset.

It was not long before the evil time came, for one day, when in bright sunshine our boat had been pulled to the middle of the lake and turned broadside to a brisk westerly breeze for a long drift, we had been casting but a few minutes when a noise like the hum of an enormous tea-kettle at boiling-point made us turn to see what it was. No need to look twice, for, though the sun was shining and the intervening water nearly smooth for some few hundreds of yards from the boat, the rest of the lake to windward was just a mass of foaming, rapidly approaching waves. There was but time to drop the rod, seize the oars, and turn her head to the storm before it struck us, when we instantly realised that it would be very good luck if we were not swamped or upset, for waves of from eight to ten feet high followed each other incessantly; and though a wave of that height is not much to be dreaded on the sea with a good long trough between each, a small boat caught in a lake storm has not much chance, as the waves follow each other so closely. It is a case of up! up!! up!!! and down! down!! down!!! as fast as possible, so we sat on the thwart gripping the oars, and facing the bow, while easying and steadying the boat to dodge each wave as it rolled past.

There was nothing else to be done, for it was uncomfortably clear that the little craft was entirely at the mercy of the wind; all the same, there was a feeling of exhilarating pleasure as each rise and fall of the boat found us still right way upwards.

In a short time the gale had blown us to within two hundred yards of Killarney House, where we resolved to ride it out, for to have let the boat go ashore would have

smashed it to pieces, and we were determined, if possible, to save the stout little craft that had served us so well. Then Lord Castlerosse, happening to be about, sent off a heavy boat with a crew of four strong men, which eventually reached the little vessel in distress, with an offer to take us on board. At first this was glady accepted, but as quickly declined on learning it was proposed to leave our boat to take its chance, the crew explaining that the waves were too big to permit of their towing it. So we stuck to our ship, while the kind crew that had come to the rescue lay by, and a small crowd of spectators watched the course of events from the shore. Thus the best part of an hour went by, during which there was a slight increase in the force of the wind, compelling us to consider whether it would not be advisable to take advantage of the shelter of the four-oared boat; but before any decision had been come to the wind dropped as if by magic, and almost as suddenly as it had begun, while an hour later the surface of the lake was hardly ruffled. So, single-handed angler, look out for squalls and keep your weather eye open is our advice if you persist in going trouting alone on Lough Leane.

Since those days Mr. S. Haynes of Cork has set the fashion of fishing for trout with very small flies,—his own patterns,—delicate little chaps, which must be seen to be appreciated.

The Lough Leane trout are fine fellows, generally herring-sized, but occasionally running up to 7 lb. The best we ever got in the lake scaled 6 lb. He took a Wickham Fancy close to the shore, and with one wild rush he made for the depths. As he neared the boat he sprang high out of the water and landed on our toes; while a

second later we were on top of him, when a blow of the fist settled matters. Not a very glorious way of getting a big trout, though at the time we thought it just as well, for he was coming full tilt at the very centre of the boat, and had it gone under it instead of trying to go over, it is likely enough it would have escaped.

Lough Leane holds fresh-run fish from the opening day, and from that date right up to the end of the season there is always a chance of salmon or grilse, either to the fly or the troll. Forty years ago the lake was severely fished by cross lines, but, alas! when they were abolished they were replaced by nets, which in the season of 1902 took fully 150 fish before the rods could legally be used.

As the lake is free to anyone as soon as the rod season begins, it is hard fished by the native professionals, for the majority of gentlemen anglers do not put in an appearance till April. In that month and the three following ones of 1901, the lake gave up just 100 fish to the rods, 44 of which were taken in the month of June. In the season of 1902, as soon as the rods could make a start the weather turned against them, and in the first fortnight only fourteen fish rewarded their efforts.

Here are the rules of the Laune Angling Association, of which the Earl of Kenmare and Lord Ardilaun are respectively President and Vice-President. It has rented the netting rights in use in 1900 by net owners in the non-tidal waters of the Laune. Original subscribers, limited to twenty-five, pay £2 each, with a further liability of £1 in the event of fresh fisheries being leased. Holders of these tickets have the right to lend them to visitors non-resident in the fishery district. The Secretary, Mr. J. Scully, Estate Office, Killarney, has power to issue tickets

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to non-subscribers at the rate of 5s. daily, £1 per week, £3 per month, £5 per three months, and £10 for the whole season. Daily tickets are not issued on Sunday or Monday, which are the two best angling days of every week, following as they do immediately on the weekly close time. Trout tickets, 2s. 6d. each for the season.

Lures are limited to fly or worm, this last-named delicacy not to be used before midday. Ghillies not allowed to fish.

The Association water is a little over four miles in length, and six miles distant from Killarney.

It is remarkable that the angling of Lough Leane should be free to the public, for it has but a few proprietors, who, had they so willed, could have combined together and kept it in their own hands, in conjunction with the Laune and Flesk, as a private fishery which could have been let for a good round sum. Had this been done, and the netting rights now in the hands of Messrs. Power and Dodd been acquired by such a syndicate, so that they might, as occasion required, have allowed a large run of fish into the lake, then indeed the angling rental, considering that the rivers and the lake fish all the season through, would have reached big figures.

Had Lough Leane been on the west coast of Scotland instead of on the west coast of Ireland, there never would have been any public right over it. However, it is probably now too late to think about anything of the sort, while it is of no use shedding tears over the spilt milk of other people's cows.

A few miles to the north of the Laune the small river the Maine falls into the head of Castlemaine Harbour, after a run of twenty-six miles. The chief owner is the Earl of Kenmare, who has about ten miles of it, which is some-

times let for the modest sum of £20 a year. In this distance there are upwards of thirty pools, all of which can be covered by a sixteen-foot rod without waders being wanted.

Although it has the same close times as the Laune, strange to say the Maine is quite a late river, with August, September, and October the best months for salmon and sea trout, of which latter there are at times a good many.

The flies are the same as for the Laune, but all other lures are permitted, while, though the river has no lake source, it remains in order for a week or ten days after a flood.

The tidal part is netted by Messrs. Power and Dodd, and when Lord Kenmare's angling is unlet it is not a difficult matter to get a day or two on it; but as the whole river—especially its tributary, the Brown Flesk—is hard poached and poisoned by lime, the poor Maine is very far removed from that angler's little paradise that it might be made.

A short run by rail from Castlemaine across the neck of the Dingle Peninsula, and skirting the spurs of the Slieve Mish Hills, will bring us to Tralee, the largest town in Kerry, at the mouth of the little river Lee, with its course of only eleven miles. As it holds but few salmon, its "studies in white and brown" are the chief attraction, so that it is hardly worth while for the angler in pursuit of salmon only to make more than a passing halt, but rather let him push on to Listowel on the Feale or Cashen River, albeit his chance is none too rosy even there. Nets and rods commence work on the Lee on the 1st of April, the former closing on the 15th and the latter on the 30th of September.

The Feale rises in the rugged slopes of some hills in

the north-west of County Cork, whose southern declivities discharge their waters into the Blackwater. After a rapid, tortuous run, in which it receives many small tributaries, while forming for some ten miles the boundary between Kerry and Limerick, it is joined by the Allaghaun at Abbeyfeale, from whence it flows for about seven miles as a good-sized river to Listowel, and passing on to the sea, five miles lower down, it changes its name to the Cashen, to fall into salt water (after a forty-six mile run, in which it drains four hundred and forty-five square miles) a little to the south of Ballybunion, where there is a good hotel, as also at Listowel. The former is most convenient for the lower part of the river and the latter for the upper reaches, the two places being connected by a trip of forty minutes in the Lartigue Railway. The rods commence on the 1st of May and continue to the end of October, the netting season starting on the 1st of June and going on to the end of August.

The flies of the Blackwater, Lee, and Bandon will also kill here, and several of the Scotch standards as well, notably Jock Scot, Childers, and Benchill. All other lures are used, a spinning bait being perhaps the best.

The angling of the river has greatly fallen off during the last thirty years. Of course there have been ups and downs, but always more of the latter than of the former. Over-netting at the mouth and poaching are the causes.

Before the North Kerry Railway was made in 1882 fish had to be sent to Glin for market, which is a long way up the estuary of the Shannon, but as soon as there was a railway station close at hand the nets began gradually to increase, and, starting from less than a dozen in 1882, they had multiplied to forty-one in 1899, while they were

fished in such close proximity that nothing could enter the river except in the weekly close time. These nets are public nets, and here, as at Killorglin and elsewhere, the public is convinced that the Government have not the power of refusing licences to applicants able to pay for them. We cannot believe this to be the fact, but if it is really so, then the excessive number of nets could be kept down by raising the licence duty higher and higher, until the desired end was gained.

The amount of the net licences, plus a few pounds derived from the rods, is all the funds that the Conservators have for the preservation of some one hundred and twenty miles of streams, for which they are only able to employ two bailiffs. If the cost of these net licences was largely increased, it would do away with some of the nets, while providing better funds for the preservation of the river, though as matters are at present those very nets that co-operate with the poachers in the destruction of the river are the chief means of providing funds to prosecute the law-breakers! If a rod on the Feale is taxed £1, then in all fairness a net should be taxed at least thirty times as much; for if a rod here gets ten fish in a season, it is quite certain a net will get 300.

In Ireland there are hundreds of cases in which rod licences are taken out by professional fishermen with the avowed object of selling what they catch, while small regard is paid as to whether they are clean or unclean. Why should this industry (if such an honourable name can be applied to such a questionable pursuit as kelt-killing) of the professional salmon rod-fisher be taxed many times more heavily than that of the professional salmon-netter? In Scotland there is no tax on rods, while there

are hardly any anglers who habitually use them as a means of making a living, though now and again, on the very few free waters that exist, such as those at Perth and Inverness, a successful local angler may sell a fish or two.

Although there are still a certain number of salmon to be got by the angler of the Feale when it is in good ply at any time after the beginning of April, when they begin to run, the sea trout, for which the river was once famous, have been practically wiped out.

The rod fishing is free, except in those parts of the river which belong to the Knight of Kerry (Sir Maurice FitzGerald) and Mr. G. Mahony. Other proprietors are the Earls of Cork and Listowel, Colonel Aldworth, and Mr. Richard Ellis, while there are also miles of river with no riparian owners in particular, being mostly in the hands of tenants who have purchased their farms.

Above Abbeyfeale wading stockings are wanted, not for the actual casting of the pools, but because it is necessary to cross and recross the river in order to fish them properly. June with July are the best months for grilse and sea trout, and October for salmon, albeit by that time they are not in very good condition, while any fish over 16 lb. is looked on as large.

As the Feale is a mountain river, it rises and falls rapidly, and is only in order after rain. A steady downpour of twenty-four hours will cause a rise of perhaps twenty feet in the upper waters, which will nevertheless be in good ply twenty-four hours after the rain has ceased, while three days later on they will be unfishable, although the river between Abbeyfeale and Listowel would still be in order for a further two days, and again below Listowel for a couple more.

Mr. Whately Ellis, in his evidence to the Commissioners of 1900, stated he had fished the river for thirty years, and that prior to 1880 it was quite common on any decent fishing day to get from twenty to thirty sea trout, averaging 1 lb. apiece. Now they are nearly gone, for Mr. Ellis's take for the whole of the season of 1899 was but nine! while he further said that he had not seen a spawning white trout for the ten previous years. While giving his evidence, Mr. Ellis mentioned something that, so far as we are aware, no other witness out of the many that came before the Commission had hitherto thought of. It was put to him, as to most of the other expert witnesses, if he approved of the railing off by gratings of the small tributaries, so that salmon could not ascend them to be left nearly dry and at the mercy of the poacher's gaff.

It cannot be doubted that such a system would be greatly to the advantage of the fish, but as the keeping of the grating free from weeds, etc., in times of flood would necessitate the constant presence of a watcher at or near the mouth of every tributary so treated, the unanimous opinion seems to have been that it was impracticable on the score of expense. Mr. Ellis at once suggested that the difficulty of the grating could be surmounted by placing a weir across the burn so as to form an impassable leap too high for a salmon to take.

It is odd no other witness had ever suggested this simple alternative, but even if it were adopted it is doubtful if the salmon wishing to ascend would not congregate in the pool below the weir just as they would at the barrier of the grating, and thus become a massed prey for the poacher. We cannot help thinking that if during and immediately after a flood such gathering-places, whether in front of

gratings or weirs, were well stoned and disturbed by a watcher, that then the fish would not continue to lie there in the expectation that the following spate would enable them to pass the obstacle.

At Listowel there is a bad weir, Latchfords, belonging to a mill, in which there is no King's Gap, and up which fish cannot leap except in very high floods. This deprives the head waters of many fish that would go to them, while it offers great temptations to the Listowel poachers. In addition to the forty-one draft-nets worked in the tideway, there are also a few worked in the fresh water by some of the riparian owners. Here, too, that horrible spurge once more makes its appearance on the banks of the Feale, while in addition lime and guano are also used by the poisoners.

Owing to some smart work by the Constabulary, who here do all they can to protect the river, a capture of poisoners was made in 1899; and from the ease with which poison is manipulated, as already explained, a conviction for this offence is very rare. Mr. Ellis tells what happened in better words than we can: "When the man was caught, he went through the country making a martyr of himself. He got the fine subscribed, with a couple of pounds over. He paid the fine and was drunk for three weeks!"

So much for fines! Lime and guano are not so deadly as spurge, for their toxic action is usually confined to the pool in which they are placed. The poisoners of the Feale make no attempt to sell the fish they get, but salt them down, adding to them the spent fish that they kill in the winter with spear, gaff, and torch.

Here also they have a method of poaching peculiar to themselves, invented to beat the bailiffs, for a man

cannot be torching without the lights being seen from a distance; but by this means no lights are required, while it is equally deadly. It is called the foot-net: two men work it by stretching the net across a ford from one man's foot to that of the other, and thus it is held in position; while their companions, commencing at the top of the ford, stone it and beat it down to the net, in which is a purse, and in this way they often take upwards of 100 spawning fish in one night.

Would that we could write more cheerfully about the angling of this pretty river and less about the over-netting and poaching; but as that is not possible we can only hope that each fresh narration of the deplorable state of affairs may at last stimulate the public and the authorities into taking more active measures for the betterment of the poor Feale.

Taking train at Listowel, we will proceed to Askeaton, on the river Deel, falling into the narrowing estuary of the Shannon, after a northerly run of forty miles from the borders of County Cork, the last part of it being dull, slow-flowing water.

Although there are no nets at the mouth of the Deel, the angling has been nearly ruined owing to some bad bungling in the construction of a weir at Askeaton, which, strange to say, was especially built to give fish easy access to the upper waters. The original intention was to have had a small weir behind the larger one; but as the last part of the programme has never been carried out, and as there is no King's Gap, the weir as it stood in 1900 became a nearly total bar to the passage of salmon above Askeaton, so thus, where formerly a fairly hard-working angler could kill from twenty to thirty spring fish to his rod, there is

now hardly one left for him, for the total take of 1899 was under a dozen, which were also all small fish of about 8 lb., whereas in the old times they used to go up to 25 lb.

When it was seen what ruin the weir was working, the Fishery Commissioners gave the riparian owners above Askeaton leave to place a King's Gap in the weir; but when they prepared to commence the work, the owners of it would not let them on to their ground to carry it out—a truly extraordinary state of affairs, seeing that the law orders that there shall be a pass in every weir.

The tide comes up to Askeaton Bridge, where it is met by a precipitous rock about twenty feet high,the whole river tumbling over it. Up to about 1860 this formed an impassable barrier, above which no fish were ever seen; then a pass was made, and from that date to 1880 there was a plentiful stock of salmon throughout the upper waters, reaching as far as Newcastle, while the sport was so good up to the end of April or May that the anglings of the Deel were easily lettable, for after that date the river gets low and fills up with rushes. Then came the weir, and it was good-bye to the fish.

Some few years ago an Angling Association was started, which acquired the rights on upwards of ten miles of water, but after preserving it for three years it had to be dissolved, in consequence of opposition got up by a few local people in the usual Irish fashion, so now the trout are netted wholesale in the summer; for the object of the Association was to preserve the brownies rather than the salmon.

The river opens for the rod on the 1st of February and continues so to the 30th of September. Of nets there are none. When there are again fish in the river, a matter

which will probably not be long deferred, the angler will find shrimp or minnow more killing than the fly.

About ten miles to the east of the Deel the Maigue falls into the Shannon, after a run of thirty-eight miles from the borders of County Cork. Its chief salmon-holding tributaries are the Camoge, of twenty-seven miles; the Morning Star, of twenty-five miles; and the Loobagh, of fifteen miles, making up fully a hundred miles of water to be protected by one bailiff! Consequently every fish that enters any of the small streams to spawn is poached to a certainty before it has done so. If to this be added a plague of unlimited public drift- and snap-nets fishing the eighteen miles of tidal water between Adare and the sea, then it is hardly necessary to state that the angling has greatly deteriorated.

The river opens for nets and rods on the 1st of February, the former coming off on the 16th of July, while the latter go on to the 30th of September. Salmon average 12 lb., while March and April are the best months, although there are always some fish got in February, and again up to the end of May. All sorts of lures are used, the natural minnow or the colley being the best, with the prawn for low water. The flies that are most in use are Jock Scot, Lemon and Grey, Silver Doctor, and Orange and Grouse. There are no rules as to carrying a gaff, so long as it is used for lawful purposes. The river fishes best with a medium height of water, the artificial weirs holding it in good order for many days in succession.

Lord Dunraven's fishery begins at Adare Railway Bridge, and from there to the public road bridge to Limerick, a distance of about a quarter of a mile, anglers can get permission by applying to Lord Dunraven's agent.

Although fish are to be caught on this short stretch, as the water is tidal it is not very pleasant work, for there are willow beds on each side, while as the tide falls the angler is reduced to slithering about on the slob land. Above the Limerick Road Bridge the tide does not go, and for the next two miles and three-quarters—up to Castle Roberts Bridge—the angling on both banks Lord Dunraven keeps in his own hands, and it is never let. In this stretch, which will carry three or four rods, there are a dozen good pools, the best of them being the Paling, Rock Hole, Phul-na-Braun, Castle Flat, and Rourke's Hole. The average take is from thirty to thirty-five a season, but it varies very much, and depends on whether spring floods prevent the estuary nets from fishing.

There are very few grilse, and what there are keep entirely to the lower portion of the river, while of sea trout there are none. On the 30th April 1897 Lord Dunraven killed nine fish with the fly, the smallest 15 lb. and the largest 25 lb.—a record day for the Demesne Water.

Above this Lord Dunraven owns the left bank for a further one and a quarter miles, which is known as the Castle Roberts Water, and is sometimes let, with its six good pools, while the right bank is owned by Mr. J. Bannatyne, who also lets it occasionally.

February and the two months that follow are the best for salmon, and though the fly will often kill in the streams, it is on prawn and minnow that the angler must rely if he would coax fish from the deep reaches of this water, of which there are several. Here a few years ago Mr. Alexander Bannatyne took five good fish in a day. The brown-trout angling is some of the best on the river, for they are

frequently taken up to 4 lb., and it is not at all rare to get them even up to 6 lb. Close to this stretch of water Lord Dunraven is now working a trout hatchery, which has already begun to improve the fishing.

Then Sir David Roche comes in on both banks for several hundred yards, when Mr. T. Browning of Caross Court has about a quarter of a mile of the right or east bank, while Sir David continues on the west or left bank until he again comes into possession of both banks for about a mile on both sides. Above this Lord Dunraven on the right bank and Mrs. Lyons of Croom House on the left one have a further quarter of a mile, when Captain Roche Kelly comes in for about a mile of both sides. Above this the water is practically open up to Bruree.

Mr. T. Browning's water consists of one stream and a very large and deep hole, which always holds salmon. Here some few years ago Mr. Browning, when fishing for pike with a *frog*, hooked and landed a salmon of 25 lb. Sir David Roche's stretch is chiefly dead, sluggish water, owing to a mill weir at the lower end, which dams the river back almost up to Croom. Captain Roche Kelly's stretch is much the same for a similar reason. The free water has several good salmon throws, especially the one below Cherry Grove Bridge. This part of the river is better known for trouting, and if salmon are *fairly* got in it by rod and line, it is quite in the early part of the season, when floods happen to meet the run of fish and carry them up. As the season advances the fish remain in the deep holes of the Lower Water, from which even a considerable flood does not seem to move them until the spawning time approaches. It is worthy of mention that the Maigue throughout its upper waters can hardly be surpassed as a trout river in

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regard to the size and quality of its fish. There are good hotels at Bruree, Croom, and Adare.

Continuing our way along the south bank of the Shannon, and passing through historical Limerick, famous for its bacon, butter, and lace, we meet the little river Mulkear or Mulcair, which falls into the Shannon at Annacotty, after a short run of fifteen miles. As poachers have rendered it nearly worthless, it is only one more stream to lament over, so we will push on to take up our quarters at Enright's Hotel, at Castleconnell.

The Shannon flows from some hills in the extreme north of County Cavan, and, passing into County Leitrim, it expands into Lough Allen, a large sheet of water ten miles in length, on leaving which it flows past Leitrim and Carrick-on-Shannon, where it enters on a chain of nearly continuous lakes—Key, Boderg, Bofin, and Forbes—until at Lanesborough it opens out into Lough Ree, some fifteen miles long. Quitting this lake at Athlone, it then flows sluggishly past Shannon Bridge and Banagher to Portumna,[1] where it enters Lough Derg, twenty miles in length and covering close on thirty thousand acres. At the southern end of this large reservoir, at Killaloe, it once more becomes a river, and ten miles below it reaches Castleconnell.

This is the largest river in Ireland, for it has a total length of two hundred and forty miles, with a drainage area of four thousand five hundred and forty-four square miles of every description of country. As the Tay, the largest of the Scotch rivers, drains but two thousand five hundred and ten square miles, it will be seen what an enormous volume of water the Shannon sends to the sea.

Long and wide as it is, its interest to the salmon angler,

[1] For angling at Portumna see p. 36.

strange to say, is limited to Castleconnell and Killaloe. None the less, those who fish at either of these places should not neglect to see for themselves the peculiar features of this river, which they can easily do now that there is a good, large, comfortable screw steamer, the *Countess of Mayo*, running between Killaloe and Dromond, on Lough Bofin, in Antrim, a distance of fully one hundred miles. The tide comes up to Limerick, sixty miles from the sea, and every salmon and peal that finds its way to the upper waters has to take its chance of escaping eight distinctly different methods of destruction devised for its capture, each of which has been brought to perfection, while each is used more or less illegally. Consequently, the united attacks of this octagonal combination are slowly but surely destroying the salmon. In the estuary there are—

Firstly, weirs and stake-nets.

Secondly, draft- or seine-nets.

Thirdly, drift-nets.

Fourthly, the cribs of the Lax Weir.

Then in the river itself the fish have to face—

Fifthly, the snap-nets above Limerick.

Sixthly, the rods.

Seventhly, the nets at Athlone and in the Boyle district.

Eighthly, the poachers.

Let us discuss them briefly in their order.

Firstly, between Limerick and the sea there are forty-two stake-nets, each with several pockets, the owners of which complain loudly of the present scarcity of fish, saying that they have not had a decent year since 1894, for that of 1895 was only middling, 1896 was one of the worst, 1897 and 1898 were very bad, while 1899 was the worst ever known !

With regard to the outcry raised by these netters and

by others, it is to be regretted that not one of them have told the Commissioners what their actual takes have been in good or bad years, so that we might be able to form an opinion for ourselves as to what a netter means us to understand by " the worst season ever known."

In the absence of such statistics, it is safe to assume that it is not as bad as it sounds, for in that case all these forty-two nets would have been working hard for four seasons for next to nothing, which is a very unlikely contingency.

The Act of 1863 did away with about eighty more of these nets, which only sprang into existence in order to get a title just before the Act was passed by the House of Lords—" that club of anglers," as an opponent of the Bill called it. Of the forty-two stake-nets that remain, the greater portion of them fish during the weekly close time; for as the law does not require the lead to be removed or the door of the pocket to be taken off and laid on the bank, and as these nets fish in places where those working them can see for miles all round them, a man need only tie or hold the door open with a rope, which he can let go or cut at the least sign of danger, when the door shuts itself, and all is in legal order long before any bailiff can approach. Therefore a law should be made compelling the weir owner to take up the door—a matter of no trouble—at the commencement of each weekly close time, aud keep it visible until it terminates.

Secondly, the draft-nets of the Shannon, some of which are worked in connection with the Lax Weir, are used in the usual way, and all that can be advanced against them is that they are of a greater length than should be allowed, and that they are worked so closely, on the principle of " one out the other in," that in low water nothing can escape them.

Thirdly, the 1863 Act had no sooner ensured better protection for the fish by doing away with a large number of fixed engines in the shape of stake-nets, than the drift-nets suddenly appeared, and, instead of nipping them in the bud, as ought to have been done (for to sanction them was but to transfer the catch of the stake-nets to their clutches), they were allowed to increase, which they did so rapidly that in 1882 there were no less than one hundred and forty-eight of them at work, each of them one hundred and thirty yards in length, altogether making close on *eleven miles* of net. Then as the fish began to diminish they fell off to one hundred and six in 1896, which had further decreased to eighty-nine in 1898.

But what tons of clean and *unclean* fish these nets must have killed in the thirty years thet followed their introduction ! Had it not been for the appearance of these horrible, wasteful nets, declared illegal in England and Scotland, the Act of 1863 would doubtlessly have improved the Shannon fisheries, as was intended; but the ravages of these new nets far exceeded those of the abolished stake-nets, and they are to blame for a great deal of the present scarcity of fish, for *wherever* they have appeared the fish have decreased.

Out of the mouth of a drift-net fisher, who complained to the Commissioners of 1900 of the bad preservation of the tributaries, came evidence sufficient to damn the use of the drift-net in the eyes of all fish preservers. Said he: "Formerly I often got from eleven to fourteen *unclean* salmon in the drift-net at one haul; for the last five years I have only got three. When I first went fishing, in 1881, I used to get four or five at each haul, and let them go."

DOONASS WATER AT CASTLECONNELL

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Whether they were let go or not would make very little difference to the poor kelts, for a drift-net *kills* by hanging them by the gills; and though it might happen that a fish may get entangled just prior to the lifting of the net, and so have some little life left in it, yet even if thrown back to the water it rarely survives injury to the gills and the exhaustion produced by the struggle for freedom; just as in the same way a kelt that has been landed by the rod will often be so tired that it will die unless held upright in the water and carefully " nursed " back to life.

Here, then, we have a drift-net owner, whose evidence is clearly genuine, admitting that there was a period, about ten years ago, when he used to get from four to five kelts a day, which would be continued all through February and March, with perhaps part of April,—let us say forty fishing days,—and we can estimate what would have been the take of kelts at the time when the drift-nets were at their zenith, when one hundred and forty-eight of them were out daily. Supposing, then, that each net took three kelts a day, that would give a destruction of 444 per diem, or 18,000 in February and March. Large as these figures seem, we fail to see how they can be disputed, for the witness did not say that he was more fortunate than others in catching kelts, and moreover, he put his daily take at four or five at a haul, which at times rose as high as eleven or fourteen; also he must have lifted his net several times each day, whereas we have based our calculation on only three fish a day, and only one haul.

We wonder if the Commissioners looked at the matter from this point of view, or whether they tried to get further statistics of this kelt massacre. We think our figures are under rather than over the mark; while, if they are anything

like correct, then small wonder that the Shannon salmon have declined in quantity and weight, for of late years it has been noticeable that big fish ranging from 30 lb. to 45 lb. are not nearly so plentiful to the rod as formerly, a matter which this kelt slaughter easily explains, for no fish can attain to such a size without having been a kelt at least twice. It will be a day of rejoicing for the Shannon if the drift-nets can be abolished. They have been put off the Slaney and some of the adjacent rivers, so it is difficult to see why they should be continued on the Shannon, especially after the evidence given by the drift-netter we have quoted. But then Ireland is a very funny place, where sauce for the goose is seldom sauce for the gander.

Fourthly, the Lax Weir Company, with its draft-nets, snap-nets, and cruives, has been complained of *en masse* by netters above and below, and by the anglers. The Manager of the Company on his part has not been behindhand in returning the bombardment; indeed, throughout the whole of the evidence given to the Commissioners of 1900, it has ever been a case of the pot abusing the kettle. "Please, sir, it ain't me," cries Mr. Cruive, an exclamation which Messrs. Draft, Drift, and Snap alternately repeat at the top of their voices when it comes to their turn.

Some of the residents on the Shannon who are well able to judge, allege that the drainage system often keeps the river at summer level in the spring, when the low water forces the fish into the Lax Weir, so that hardly any get past it. Others say that the King's Gaps in it are wholly ineffective, being badly constructed and improperly placed, while they have been tampered with by filling them up with stones. Again, others declare that the cruives are not all opened during the weekly close time.

Certainly, then, it would be very desirable that the Lax Weir should be fished strictly in accordance with the letter of the law, for from its position it holds the key to the salmon supply of all the waters above it. Its killing powers are very great, which is proved by the fact that when it last changed hands, the purchase price was £12,000. On this basis it may be anticipated that the purchasers would not be content with a return of less than 20 per cent. on their outlay, seeing that the business is a fluctuating one, and also entailing a heavy expenditure on labour, etc.; therefore £2400 a year may be put down as the average clear profit, to produce which would require a take of 15,000 fish of 10 lb. sold at 10d. a pound, and we do not think either the average weight or price is as high as this.

Looking at this weir solely with the eyes of an enthusiastic angler, it would be a splendid thing for the renters of salmon fishing if the proprietors at Castleconnell and Killaloe would combine to buy it up, together with the private snap-net rights above it; and if the public drift-nets in the estuary were abolished this might possibly be done, as a scheme somewhat of this description has already been discussed.

Fifthly, the snap-nets just mentioned are privately leased to the netters, and are not in any way a public right. Those who rent them complain bitterly of the falling-off in their takes, though none of them will tell us in round numbers what the captures of the good days were as compared with those of the last fifteen years.

Sixthly, the rods—and although it seems absurd to class these with the far more powerful engines of destruction already mentioned, which in one day kill more fish than the

rods do in the whole season, nevertheless, as the anglers do kill a certain, but sadly small, amount of fish, we suppose they must be included amongst the "engines." Further on it will be seen how very, very small the rod take has become.

There is a strong consensus of opinion amongst the Shannon proprietors that to a very great extent the drainage system is responsible for the diminished supply of fish, for before the construction of the sluice gates at Killaloe, Lough Derg used to rise steadily or to fall gradually, according as the weather was wet or dry. At present, when the Lough has risen to a certain height, the sluice gates are suddenly lifted, and an immense mass of water is discharged into the river with a mighty rush, so that two or three hours suffice to send as much water to the sea as would formerly have required several days to drain away. Thus the river is kept almost continuously at a low level, to be suddenly raised for an hour or two at such intervals as the keeper of the sluice gate may deem proper, and these short-running floods are not sufficient in duration to bring the fish forwards.

The netters complain loudly of the rods being allowed to fish after they have been obliged to stop, not because of the harm the anglers do in catching a few black fish, for they admit that the captures made by the rods in October are but a trifle, the total of which would not amount to the proceeds of one night's poaching on a tributary; but they say that the prolongation of the angling season is an enormous encouragement to the poachers, who are thus enabled to sell openly their illegally caught fish as rod-taken fish. There certainly is a good deal to be said in favour of this plea, and it has been suggested as a compromise that nets

and rods should begin on the 1st of January instead of the 12th of February, the former to cease on the 15th of July in lieu of the 31st, and the latter on the 30th of September in place of the 31st of October.

Mr. Anthony Mackey, who leases the eel fisheries of the Shannon from the Board of Works, and who is also an angler, when giving his evidence to the Commissioners, proposed that a whole month should be cut off the netting season, and that both nets and rods should cease on the 30th of June, his object being to let in the peal, as rightly enough he considered a massacre of the boys and girls not to be just the very best way of increasing a population. He said—

"It would be better to get one spring salmon rather than ever so many in October, and I reckon that from a monetary point of view a spring fish is more valuable, but from a national point of view the October salmon is much more so: he has lived through all the difficulties of the year, he has brought in his ova within a few weeks of the time to spawn, and has become a valuable acquisition from a national point of view, although as a marketable article he is only worth 2d. a pound!

"I do not mean to say that the number killed by the rods is any harm to speak of, but where the difficulty comes in is that the whole country is open for the sale of these red fish, no matter how they are caught. They can be exposed for sale as rod-caught fish in all the country markets at a low price.

"I think the Shannon ought not to be shut at a time when valuable spring fish are running, and open to the rods and the poachers at a time when the fish have but a small monetary value, though a very large national one."

With regard to the suggestion of opening the river earlier, it is undoubtedly the case that clean fish in fair quantities are running in December and January, but such an alteration would meet with sharp opposition from the upper proprietors, who would urge, with some reason, that the fish which ran in January were the only ones that ever reached them, though it may be a moot question as to whether the curtailment of the netting season by a fortnight, which would ensure them a much larger supply of spawners, would not eventually benefit them to such an extent as to more than compensate them for any loss of early fish.

In speaking of the facilities offered by differing close seasons for the sale of poached fish, it is remarkable that the Maigue, which falls into the Shannon only a little below Limerick, opens for nets and rods on the 1st of February, or eleven days earlier than the Shannon, a matter which should certainly be altered, as it is a great incentive to poaching at a time of year when fish fetch the highest prices.

There are many more clean salmon in the Shannon than in the Maigue on the 1st of January, and it would almost seem as if the people who made this close time did it on purpose to give the poachers a chance. Anyway, the Limerick market is plentifully supplied with spring salmon from the 1st of February, *all* of which are caught in the Maigue—at least, so it is *said*; and although the bailiffs know well enough that it is not true, yet they are powerless to interfere. Therefore, if the angling close season is to be altered in order to prevent the sale of poached fish, pray let us have the netting times also altered with the same object.

Seventhly, the fresh-water nets at Athlone and in the

Boyle district only came into existence in 1863, after the abolition of the greater part of the stake-nets in the estuary, and should promptly have been squashed by the authorities, for certainly the Act by which the stake-nets were done away with did not contemplate a transfer of the fish from them to other nets working in fresh water, and all those fresh-water nets that failed to prove a right prior to 1862 should have been done away with ; but as nobody troubled about it, the evil still exists, greatly to the injury of the river.

Eighthly, the poachers probably represent a larger destructive power than the united captures of all the above-mentioned methods put together, for they chiefly kill fish in the tributaries when they are about to spawn. The destruction is wholesale, from cartfuls to sackfuls. They are salted, and said to be better than herrings ; while any very black, unwholesome-looking ones are given to the pigs ! Great stress has been laid on the fact that lately more spawners have been seen in the tributaries, and if they were only left undisturbed there would be good reason for rejoicing ; but inasmuch as hardly one of these fish live to return to the sea, while the bulk of them are killed before spawning, it does not leave much room for crowing, and fully accounts for the increasing scarcity of spring fish.

The Shannon with its tributaries makes up a total of from twelve to fifteen hundred miles of waters to be protected, for which the available income is in round numbers only £2500, sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less, but quite inadequate for doing the business properly.

The inspectors and bailiffs work hard, and do their best, and obtain many convictions and fines—a matter that is disheartening to a degree, for no sooner is a fine inflicted

than on the poachers appealing to the Dublin Castle authorities it is reduced almost as a matter of course to next to nothing. In 1892 the total fines came to £423, which were remitted to £74! Thus, as the procuring of these convictions had cost the Conservators £134, they were practically fined £60 in return for their activity in enforcing the law! In 1893 the penalties came to £791, only to be remitted to £71! In 1894 the fines were £144, reduced to £32. If it were not so serious, the whole thing would be a screaming farce; and it is to be hoped the Dublin authorities will wake up and not stultify themselves by aiding people to break laws, the preservation of which is the only *raison d'être* of the existence of the authorities themselves.

Also the authorities are further egregiously humbugged in these appeals for remission. Poor Pat is often represented as a feeble old married man out of work, with a large family of starving children, when, as a fact, he is a young bachelor, full of health and strength. Also there are often cases where fines have been remitted, and the same man has been brought up for the same offence within a few weeks, when again, being fined afresh, the fine has again been reduced! If fines are to act as a deterrent to poaching, they should be enforced in the same way that they are in England and Scotland, while poachers convicted a certain number of times should be sent to prison without the option of paying a fine. If this was done, and if the Constabulary were ordered to help the bailiffs in the spawning season, there would be a good chance of keeping this rampant and wanton poaching within bounds.

The Lough Derg trout are also just as sweet to the poacher as salmon and require as much preservation,

THE HERMITAGE WATER, POUL-NA-HASSA

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for they quit the lake in vast numbers to spawn in the streams, where they are swept up by basketfuls; and we certainly think that anglers who go to Mount Shannon or any of the other centres on Lough Derg for the May-fly season should be called on to pay a 10s. rod licence, as unless something of the sort is done to provide better protection, assuredly the May-fly season there will become a thing of the past, for it has already fallen off greatly from its best days.

As the Shannon fisheries have undoubtedly been injured by the Government in the construction of the drainage works, which have entailed already-described evils on the river, while necessitating the destruction at Killaloe of the largest and finest spawning bed on it, it may be fairly urged that the Shannon has a claim on the authorities which no other river has, except the Erne for similar reasons.

Upwards of one million has been spent on these drainage works, whereby the river from Lough Allen to Killaloe has practically been converted into a lake, with no rapids such as salmon delight to spawn on. In the same period the Government have spent over £750,000 in harbours and improvement of the sea fisheries, although their value is but £390,000 as against £520,000 of the salmon fisheries, on which nothing has ever been spent. So the Shannon proprietors may fairly ask that their efforts for the improvement of the fishery should be backed up by State aid. There is no doubt that the Government, while improving the property of others by reclaiming their lands from floods by the drainage works, have done considerable harm to the properties of those concerned in the salmon supply and salmon angling of the river. Had this been done by private enterprise, the initiators would have

been liable to an action for damages; but the King can do no wrong, and although the axiom is indisputable, the power is seldom, if ever, abused, and we cannot but think that if the matter was properly laid before the authorities they might be inclined to make some recompense for the injury unwittingly wrought, and scarcely to have been foreseen.

Perhaps even they might be induced to purchase the Lax Weir and place it in the hands of trustees chosen from the riparian owners, to work as they thought best in the interests of the river!

Having in as few words as possible made the reader acquainted with the main features of all the legal and illegal methods of capture in use on the Shannon, we will now turn to its anglings. The river opens for rods on the 1st of February, the nets not commencing till the 12th of the month and ceasing on the 31st of July, while the rods may be plied to the 31st of October—fully a fortnight too late, in our humble opinion, for by that time the fish are very black, and certainly not worth eating by anyone who "knows what's what."

With reference to these black fish, writing of them recalls an amusing incident which happened to us some years ago, when, having brought home a gentleman of 42 lb., who for reasons best known to himself had gone into the deepest mourning, our host packed him off to a well-known owner of racehorses. The gift was warmly acknowledged, and in return we were sent the winner of the Cesarewitch, which happened to be in the stable of our friend. So far so good, for a few days later all of us were a little the richer. Now the big fish had been sent by our host because he knew his friend was not an angler, and

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The late Tuohy, a celebrated Shannon man, in the cot

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would not attach much importance to the colour of the gift. Neither did he; but to our dismay, later on we heard that as he was leaving home, and could not eat it himself, he had presented it, "as one of the finest and best-conditioned fish he had ever seen," to a royal duke, who, well knowing all about salmon, was much too clever to eat it. Now, although the duke had also backed the winner of the Cesarewitch, he nevertheless vowed we had conspired to make an attack on his digestion, and that this was a matter that could only be put right by a meeting round the royal table under a solemn promise that we would drink as much "forty-seven" as the big fish would have wanted of water for him to swim in.

But to return to the Shannon. Salmon weigh from 12 lb. to 45 lb., and in the good times many were the captures ranging between 30 lb. and 40 lb., therefore it is not an easy matter to state an average weight; but Lord Massy, who knows the river well, puts it at between 19 lb. and 20 lb.

Peal average from 5½ lb. to 6½ lb., and beginning to run about the 20th of May, the season is at its height by the middle of June.

March, April, and May are the best months for salmon, June and July for grilse. August is comparatively idle, with September and October yielding autumn fish. There are no sea trout worth mention, though an odd one is got now and again in June and July.

The angling is chiefly carried on from "cots" or flat-bottomed boats, worked by two men with stings, and managed with great skill by the Castleconnell and Killaloe boatmen.

Here is a photograph of a cot with the late Tuohy

standing in it, who, until recently, was the oldest and most famous cot man on the river. We give, also, a portrait of another good man, C. Scaife, usually employed by Mr. C. G. Williams, which well shows the sort of gaff used on the Shannon, with the long handle always made of hazel. Personally we prefer a somewhat stouter hook, with a simple broad curve, for we think they take a better hold and are less liable to straighten when lifting out a very big fish, or when making a bad stroke and catching the point against a stone instead of against a fish.

The cots are poled into position and held there by the boatmen whilst the angler fishes as much of the pool as he can reach, when the cot is dropped a little down stream, and the angler commences again.

The old-fashioned lures were fly, par, eel tail, and colley ; then about 1870 the shrimp was introduced, which is in reality a small prawn, for a further description of which see " Galway River," p. 19. At first the salmon took this new lure with remarkable freedom, and though at times they still take it well, there is a growing idea that, having got used to the lure, they do not lay hold of it as freely as formerly. Be that as it may, the Devon minnow is now the favourite. The fly is not of much use until May, but even then more reliance is placed on the bait.

There are eight fisheries at Castleconnell, all of which used to give grand sport when the water was just right for each ; for of course some are high-water, and some are medium, and others are low-water anglings. Their names are Doonass, Hermitage, Worldsend, Woodlands, New-garden, Prospect, Summer Hill, and the Castle.

Here are the returns from the Doonass Water for

SCAIFE, A WELL-KNOWN CASTLECONNELL COT MAN

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many years, which is the best of the Castleconnell anglings—

1863 . .	Before Act of 1863.	167 fish for the season.
1865 . .	Till end of August.	425 „ „
1866 . .	Whole season.	671 „ „
1877 . .	No record.	149 in June only.
1878 . .	„	107 „
1879 . .	„	102 „
1880 . .	June, 94.	92 to 14th July.
1881 . .	127 July only.	
1884 . .	113 salmon to 31st May.	
1888 . .	12 days of July, 106.	
1889 . .	only 38 to 31st May.	
1890 . .	„ 36 „	
1891 . .	„ 35 „	
1892 . .	„ 35 „	
1893 . .	„ 28 „	
1894 . .	„ 84 „	
1895 . .	„ 33 „	
1896 . .	„ 55 „	
1897 . .	„ 34 „	
1898 . .	„ 47 „	51 June and July.
1899 . .	„ 19 „	37 June to 14th July.

It will be seen how greatly the catch of salmon has fallen off since 1884. This fishery was at one time let for £360, which eventually rose to £1000, and it still remains but a little under that figure. The late Mr. George C. Williams of Llanrumney Hall, Cardiff, has had it for the spring of the last five seasons, and it is to him I am indebted for the excellent photographs of the river.

The Hermitage Water of Lord Massy comes next. Here are the returns for a number of years—

1884 . .	104 salmon to 31st May.	
1889 . .	37 „	64 afterwards.
1890 . .	46 „	75 „
1891 . .	30 „	125 „
1892 . .	44 „	103 „
1893 . .	19 „	71 „

1894 . .	49 salmon to 31st May.	107 afterwards.
1895 . .	29 „	47 „
1896 . .	32 „	55 „
1897 . .	28 „	57 „
1898 . .	23 „	30 „
1899 . .	16 „	21 „

Here, again, the falling-off from 1884 is very marked. This is a very pretty bit of water, which Lord Massy usually keeps in his own hands for May and June, and lets for the rest of the season. It consists of about half a mile of the County Limerick or left bank, in which there are twelve casts, most of them fished by cot. Of these, Back of the Leap, Fallahassy, Poolbeg, the Commodore, and Moreagh are the best. The average take is forty salmon to end of May, with seventy grilse and twenty salmon in the autumn. Perhaps the best score ever made on this reach was that of the 104 salmon taken by Captain Vansittart prior to the 31st of May, which weighed 2234 lb., showing the extraordinary average of over 21 lb. This beat fishes best in very high and quite low water.

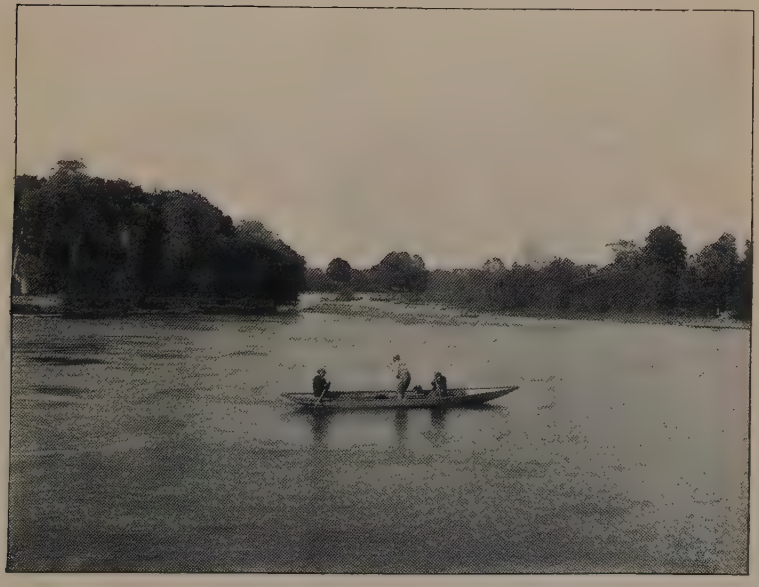
The Worldsend water returns since 1893—

1893 . .	4 days a week.	13 to 31st May.	29 afterwards.
1894 . .	5 „	20 „	55 „
1895 . .	whole week.	20 „	16 „
1896 . .	„	12 „	19 „
1897 . .	„	19 „	21 „
1898 . .	„	10 „	12 „
1899 . .	„	6 „	15 „

The Woodland water—

1885 . 33	to 31st May.	55 afterwards.	
1886 . 32	„	47 „	
1887 . 9	„	9 „	Not fished for part of season.
1890 . 25	„	20 „	„ „
1891 . 16	„	No record.	„ „
1893 . 16	„	47 afterwards.	„ „

PART OF DOONASS AND HERMITAGE
Poul-Na-Hassa in the distance



MR. G. C. WILLIAMS PRAWNING ON NEWGARDEN

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1894 . 21	to 31st May.	59	afterwards.	Not fished for part of season.
1895 . 21	„	42	„	„ „
1896 . 31	„	37	„	„ „
1897 . 18	„	23	„	„ „
1898 . 15	„	36	„	„ „
1899 . 8	„	23	„	„ „

This water consists of about three-quarters of a mile on the right or County Clare bank.

NEWGARDEN

1889 . . .	32	to 31st May;	no record later.
1890 . . .	25	„	„
1891 . . .	24	„	164 afterwards.
1892 . . .	34	„	114 „
1893 . . .	29	„	48 to 26th August.
1894 . . .	37	„	101 to end of season.
1895 . . .	33	„	16 „
1896 . . .	40	„	22 „
1898 . . .	30	„	36 „
1899 . . .	12	„	48 „

This fishery shows the falling-off in grilse as well as in salmon. 1891 and three following seasons gave 423 fish, chiefly grilse, after the 31st of May. 1895 and three following years only yielded 122.

PROSPECT

1896 . . .	15	to 31st May;	34 afterwards.
1897 . . .	12	„	49 „
1898 . . .	12	„	30, list incomplete.
1899 . . .	8	„	31

The Newgarden and Prospect fishings which in 1899 were rented by Mr. Harrison Cripps, F.R.C.S., 2 Stratford Place, Oxford Street. In November 1899 he wrote to the Commissioners as follows:—

"I am afraid it would be impossible for me to come over and give evidence just now, but, if necessary, I might

do so. I hold on lease the rod-fishing of two of the largest fisheries at Castleconnell, and since I have fished this water every year for thirteen seasons I think you will recognise that I am not speaking without good knowledge. I pay £500 a year rent on lease, and employ four men on the water. Owing to the steady falling-off in the fishing, my water has become almost valueless—indeed, so much so that this year it was not worth fishing, and I did not go over. In the present state of affairs, when my lease terminates, four years hence, I would not renew at as many shillings as I now pay pounds. I have constantly observed my water and the habits of the salmon, and have no doubt as to the chief cause of the scarcity of fish. The grilse only run for a very limited period, from about the middle of June to the middle of July. The whole future supply of salmon in the following years depends on the number of grilse that get through the nets into the river. If the water should be at a low summer level, as it has been for the last few years, owing to the narrow gut through which the main stream has to pass in a portion of the Limerick district" (Mr. Cripps alludes, evidently, to the King's Gaps in the Lax Weir; it is only his courtesy which prevents him from naming the culprit), "practically every grilse is stopped to be killed in the nets.

"Of recent years, when the water has been low, and when I have been fishing in the last week of June and the first one of July day by day, I have hardly seen a grilse in the whole of my water, when all the time I would be reading of the large quantities taken in the nets below. Another cause of the failure of a fair proportion of these fish to get through is the mismanagement of the weekly close time, for, owing to the great length of the estuary,

"PINEE," PROSPECT WATER

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PUTNEY

it does not give time enough for the fish to get through, and those that escape the nets of the lower reaches when they are off on Saturday and Sunday are got on the upper reaches by the nets on Monday and Tuesday. I would make the following suggestions :—

"1. That the weekly close time should be altered so as to be Saturday and Sunday in the lower half of the Limerick district, and Sunday and Monday in the upper half.

"2. An absolutely close time for grilse, all netting and angling being stopped for the last ten days of June, or, considering how comparatively small is the number of grilse killed by the rod, that the upper proprietors should, if angling were permitted during these ten days, give up in exchange the last two months of the season, namely, September and October, at which period the fish are but poor sport for angling purposes."

Summerhill and Castle usually go together. In

1889	24 to 31st May.	43	afterwards.
1890	27 ,,	53	,,
1891	19 ,,	45	,,
1892	22 ,,	138	,,
1893	18 ,,	44	,,
1894	35 ,,	47	,,
1895	33 ,,	19	,,
1896	39 ,,	29	,,
1897	21 ,,	33	,,
1898	34 ,,	34	,,
1899	16 ,,	12	,,

The Summerhill fishery belongs to Colonel Vincent, and is let to Mr. Ingham, who has purchased the De Burgho property opposite, and in which is comprised the Castle Water. The whole is about half a mile on both banks, sometimes fished by the owner and sometimes let. Only one boat is wanted, while there are one or two pools that

can be fished from the bank. It has been little fished for peal for the last few seasons, owing to their scarcity. Medium high water suits best.

It is worthy of note that in 1899 salmon were so scarce that only eighty-four were taken on the whole of the Castleconnell fisheries up to the 31st of May, and this though the waters were harder fished than ever with every sort of lure; for it is always the case that as fish get fewer the harder will the true angler work.

As usual, this river gave up some very heavy fish: two from the Doonass Water scaled 46 lb. each, and fell to the rods of Mr. G. C. Williams and the Rev. W. Foley.

Sir Daniel Gooch writes me that in May 1906 in fourteen days on "Newgarden" he had twelve fish, weighing 245 lb.; in 1907, from the same water in March and April twenty-two salmon, weighing 438¼ lb.; in 1910, in April forty-two fish, weighing 850¾ lb. From "The Hermitage" in March and April of 1912 he had twenty-four salmon, weighing 652 lb., showing the remarkable average of over 27 lb.!

Here are the united catches of the whole of the Castleconnell anglings—

1905 . . .	292 fish.	1908 . . .	391 fish.
1906 . . .	328 „	1909 . . .	580 „
1907 . . .	186 „	1910 . . .	478 „

It will not do to leave these parts without mentioning the Enrights, who have made the Castleconnell rod famous wherever there are anglers—always a spliced rod, sometimes in three pieces, but more often in only two; with their small buts, spring from the hand, and great power, they possess a fascination of their own, which makes a return to the metal joints unpleasant. Of course in travel-

ling about there is the drawback of stowing away in safety the length of each half of an eighteen-foot rod.

From these remarks it will be seen that here, as in nearly every other river in Ireland, the salmon is regarded in much the same light as are our English hares in those counties where the shootings are small and held by the tenants. Each one says to himself, "It is here to-day, it will be gone to-morrow; if I do not kill it my neighbour will get it, so I may just as well have it myself," so every hare is shot, with the result that in many counties they have been wiped out. What has happened to the hare in some parts of England will happen to the salmon in Ireland, only the process of annihilation will be longer. The quantity of hares in any particular county is, however, hardly a matter of national importance, whereas our salmon fisheries are; and if the Irish Fishery Commissioners do not speedily take the bull by the horns, they will justify the opinion already freely expressed by many Irish gentlemen, that they are practically worthless except as regards sea fisheries.

The river between the top of the Castleconnell angling and Killaloe is not of much account, although some early fish are always taken on the Parteen Water, belonging to Mr. Twiss of Birdhill House. Therefore we will make our way direct to the comfortable quarters at Ayle Vane House, kept by Mr. A. M. Grace, who is also agent for Mr. J. Odell Vintner of Southfield, Cambridge, and always ready to give anglers every information.

The fishing is limited to barely three-quarters of a mile above Killaloe Bridge, with about two and a half miles below it, sport being carried on in just the same way as at Castleconnell.

The first fishery met with belongs to General O'Nial. It is always let, and consists of about a mile on the Clare, or right bank, in which there are four good pools—Upper and Lower Scrammel, Clough, and Bewalls. High water suits it best, and salmon are got from the opening of the season to the end of May. June and July are good for grilse, a few sea trout coming with them.

Opposite to this is the Free Water, on the Tipperary side.

Above the bridge, on the Clare side, the angling belongs to Major Gartside Spaight, who lets it to Mr. J. Odell Vintner, who sublets, while reserving for himself a rod in June and July. The opposite side belongs to Mr. F. C. Henry of Fort Henry, Killaloe, the top pool on this side being owned by Major Spaight of Derry Castle, Killaloe. The angling of this side is also let, Mr. Henry reserving a rod for himself in autumn. The two sides are limited to two boats each, but two rods may fish from the same boat, while in high water there is a little bank casting. Though salmon are taken from the opening day, the best of the sport is usually in April and May; June and July for grilse.

Low water suits this fishery best, and floods are quickly run off by the aid of the sluice gates. The season of 1891 was a good one on this part of the Shannon, many very heavy fish being killed. On the 8th of May, Mr. J. C. H. Daniel, on the Tipperary side, had no less than seven fish, weighing 140 lb., the largest scaling 30 lb.; while on the same day Mr. Cecil Wray had two of 32 lb. and 30 lb., Mr. Mott other two of 20 lb. and 14 lb., Mr. Spurling one of 18 lb., and Mr. Buckworth one of 12 lb.—thirteen spring fish for that day weighing 268 lb. On the day before this

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big score eight others were captured, headed by a forty-pounder, which fell to the rod of Mr. Spurling.

It is remarkable that in 1891 the peal fishing, in spite of the few seen at Castleconnell, was very good, for sixty-three with three salmon were taken in one week, while the following one gave forty-two with four salmon.

There are about a dozen good casts in this two miles of water, the best perhaps being the three Meadow Pools, the Mill Pool, Isle Rue, Kissanne, and Bonan Voi, though the spelling of this latter one is perhaps phonetic. For several years our old friend, the late Major Traherne, rented the famous Fort Henry anglings on the Tipperary side, and many were the whoppers he laid on the bank. In the season of 1902 the total take on the Fort Henry Water was 61 salmon, averaging 18½ lb., headed by one of 45½ lb., plus 119 grilse.

The preserved water at Killaloe is now divided into six beats, which are let by the fortnight or month or longer as may be arranged. The heaviest fish are caught in the spring and again in October, and each season fish up to 45 lb. are taken. In 1911 there were 365 salmon and 68 peal caught; one rod, Mr. W. M'Combie Gordon, fishing Mr. Parker's water and the Mill Pool, took 122 salmon, weighing 2586 lb., and 28 peal, 152 lb. Included in this nice catch were salmon of 42 lb. and 40 lb., and 25 others scaling from 30 lb. to 38 lb. In 1912 he had 59 fish, weighing 1401 lb., 15 peal, 84 lb., amongst them the largest fish of the Killaloe season, 44 lb. Grace's Hotel is the place to put up at, and anglers can bear in mind that Lough Derg and its daping with the May-fly is quite handy to Killaloe, and begins about the middle of May. All this is free except for the cost of the men and the boat. There is also a considerable

stretch of free salmon fishing on the same terms. The hire of the two men and boat costs 10s. a day and their lunch. In all conscience cheap enough if one happens to get a 30-lb. fish!

Though the bulk of the fish are killed by baits, prawn and spoon being the favourites, there are always some taken with the fly—in April and May rather than in February and March, and altogether there are more fish taken with the fly at Killaloe than at Castleconnell. A good sportsman will kill about half his fish with the fly; the green hands and the duffers who let their boatmen fish and only take the rod when a salmon is hooked seldom see the fly used, as the boatmen—fishing solely for the pot—prefer the bait. Most of the standard Scotch patterns will kill, such as Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, and Blue Doctor, to which can be added the Castleconnell patterns already given.

As Killaloe is the chief centre of the Shannon eel-fishery weirs, which have been accused of killing masses of smolts in their descent to the sea, it may be as well to say that, in our humble opinion, and so far as these particular eel weirs are concerned, they have been erroneously attacked, and that the injury they cause is not worth mentioning, for they do not commence to fish at any of the three stations (the other two being at Athlone and Castleconnell) until the 1st of July, by which date the bulk of the smolts are already in salt water. In this respect these eel nets differ widely from those at Toome Bridge on Lough Neagh,[1] which, commencing to fish a month earlier, do undoubtedly kill a vast amount of smolts.

The habits of the slimy ones are exactly the reverse

[1] See "River Bann," p. 103 sqq.

THE SHANNON AT ATHLONE

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to those of the *salmonidæ*, for they go to the sea to spawn and return to the river to recuperate. These eel nets have a very badly fixed close time on the Shannon, for they have to cease work on the 31st of January, just at the very time when there is a great run to the sea during February, and it would do away with all chance of imputing damage to smolts if these nets, which catch but little in the opening month, were not allowed to begin to work till the 1st of August, and to continue to the end of February. Later on, when the eels return to the river in April and May, after having spawned, they are just as much kelts, and unfit for food, as are salmon that have spawned in fresh water; nevertheless, large quantities are poached by lengthy night lines, and sent to Billingsgate for sale.

The small tributaries to Lough Derg (which, by the way, is fearfully poached by cross-lines) are very numerous, and up most of them salmon poke their way to spawn. The three largest fall in on the north shore—the Cappoch, the Woodford, and the Scarriff, which empties the Loughs of Graney and O'Grady. In respect of this last-named tributary, Colonel O'Callaghan Westropp, through whose property it flows, gave to the Commissioners a dire report indeed, for even the tennis nets were stolen from his lawn to be used by the poachers, while not one single fish that comes up in the autumn ever returns; and the trout, too, are poached wholesale, and the fish that are destroyed in this one little stream would stock a fair-sized river.

Passing Portumna,[1] the Little Brosna, of thirty-six miles, falls in on the left bank at Meelick, forming the boundary between Tipperary and King's County, while

[1] See "Galway County," p. 3 sqq.

the Brosna proper enters the river to the north, a few miles beyond Banagher. Under present circumstances neither stream is seriously worth considering by the salmon-fisher from England.

Although both rivers have angling associations, that on the little one being initiated by Colonel Rutledge, while that of the Brosna proper was started by Sir Andrew Armstrong, both gentlemen complain that the lock at Meelick has spoilt the spawning beds of the Shannon thereabouts, and that the fish, ousted from their old quarters, where they were safe, have been forced to spawn in the two Brosnas, where they have become the spoil of the poacher, as the associations have not sufficient funds to give them proper protection.

On the Galway side of the main river the Suck is the chief tributary, which has been dealt with when writing of County Galway, on p. 36.

At Athlone the river expands into Lough Ree, the principal tributary to which, the Inny, is in much the same sorry plight as those of Lough Derg, albeit it drains the Loughs of Derravarra and Iron, and discharges a large volume of water into the lake. As from Lough Ree upwards the Shannon is of no account as a salmon-angling river, we will come to the end of our labours with a very few words about the streams falling into the Shannon estuary on the Clare side.

The Bunratty is the first of any consequence after leaving Limerick, and we think we are correct in saying that a few spring fish and some grilse in June are got in it. The same may be said with respect to the Fergus at Ennis, where there is an imposing-looking salmon leap.

From Fergus mouth to Loop Head, on the west, there

THE SALMON LEAP AT ENNIS, ON THE FERGUS

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are numerous small streams, most of them being deadly traps for spawning salmon, albeit holding sea trout in summer floods.

On rounding Loop Head and turning up the Atlantic-washed shores of Clare, we again meet with numbers of similar short streams, of which the most prominent are the Coonaclare, the Creech, the Annageeragh, draining Lough Doo; the Cullenagh, at Ennistymon, with the Kilcolgan and Clarin falling into Galway Bay at Stradbally—all of which hold a few salmon, but more sea trout.

This brings us once more to Galway city, where, when first starting on our book, we jauntily doffed our "caubeen" to the public with a heart made merry by the thought of seeing new rivers; now, however, that we have come to the end of our undertaking, we lay down our pen somewhat in a state of depression, for it has been but poor work to wander from river to river, only to find that in nearly all of them salmon-angling has been almost ruined by illegal practices—angling which, if only properly preserved, would be the means of bringing many thousands of pounds of English gold into this terribly poverty-stricken but most beautiful island.

CHAPTER XIII

A Short Comparison of the Irish Fishery Laws with those of Scotland

Although there is a continually increasing diminution of the salmon supply both in Scotland and Ireland, we think it is quite clear that this arises from widely different causes.

In Scotland the falling-off admits of easy explanation, for the poaching there is comparatively nothing to what it is in Ireland; moreover, there are no public netting rights, while in only a few cases is there any netting in fresh water, the Spey, the Tay, and the Awe[1] being perhaps the most prominent examples of river netting.

All the mischief in Scotland is caused by the shortness of the weekly close time, coupled with there being no limit to the number of the coast bag-nets that may be set up; and unless something is done in the direction that we advocate, the Scotch salmon supply will never make any great improvement. When the Scotch weekly close time was fixed at thirty-six hours by the Act of 1868—viz. from six o'clock on Saturday afternoon to the same hour on Monday morning—there were just about a thousand stake- and bag-nets working round the whole of the Scotch coasts, and our law-makers, after due reflection, considered that this weekly close time was long enough to ensure such a stock of *salmonidæ* to all the rivers as would amply provide

[1] The Awe netting has now ceased.

against the ravages of these one thousand nets and yet leave a large surplus for sport and for breeding. In this premise they were right enough, for after 1868 salmon did begin to increase considerably, but *pari passu* so did the nets, until, a few years ago, there were fully two thousand at work, all of which were more scientifically managed than formerly. Thus, though the weekly slap of thirty-six hours could provide against the destruction of one thousand nets, it was wholly unable to keep pace with the ravages of double that number, and down ! down !! down !!! went the Scotch salmon supply, never to go up ! up !! up !!! again until the number of the bag-nets is limited, and the weekly close time made to correspond with the Irish one of forty-eight hours—from 6 a.m. on Saturday to 6 a.m. on Monday.

Therefore in this respect the Irish rivers are better off than the Scotch ones, while also they are in a superior position with regard to the annual close seasons; for in Ireland there is no absurd law, as there is in Scotland, which decrees that the annual close time *must* be neither more nor less than one hundred and sixty-eight days !—a reading of the 1868 Act which compels the Fishery Board of Scotland to declare many rivers to be open on the 11th of February, although no clean fish are ever known to enter them until two or three months later, a feeble proceeding, which gives the kelt-catcher and the poacher only too good an opportunity.

The amount of poaching in Scotland is as nil when compared with what goes on in Ireland. In the former country it is kept under fairly well; in the latter—phew ! it is simply appalling. Often have we speculated as to whether it would not be possible to get together a combination of proprietors of salmon anglings with a view of send-

ing paid "missionaries" into the worst-poached districts to preach on behalf of the spawning fish, and to prove to the ignorant "boys" who now make a practice of killing them on the spawning beds, that they would put more money into their pockets by preserving them than by salting them. "Sermons" might also be addressed to netters and cruive men, pointing out that they are cutting their own throats in killing every grilse they can, for the pretty little fellows will not scale more than 5 lb. apiece, which represents 5s., at a market price of 1s. a pound, whereas if these June and July grilse were allowed to live they would return as salmon in the following spring, varying in weight from 12 lb. to 17 lb., and then they would be worth 2s. a pound in the market, and thus every grilse worth only 5s. in June would then realise from 24s. to 34s. in the spring, the difference in price going into the pocket of the net-owner. Perhaps the parish priests might be induced to take an interest in the question, though it is an open secret that as matters are at present many of them are the grateful recipients of a bit of poached salmon.

If the Government would only order the Coastguards and the Constabulary to help in the preservation of the spawning beds, and the enforcement of the weekly close time, all would soon be well with the Irish fisheries; and it is truly remarkable that there is such reluctance on the part of the authorities to make this concession, which would benefit the whole of Ireland so much. If poaching in Scotland was carried on in the same wasteful, wholesale, and unchecked manner as it is in Ireland, then, what with that evil and the destruction caused by the two thousand bag-nets, there would hardly be a fish left in the "land of cakes."

Again, with regard to the drift-nets, which in Scotland have been abolished off the surface of the waters, in Ireland they are painfully in evidence, fishing not only in the open sea but in the estuaries of the rivers. It is needless to say more here about these nets, except to mention once again the fact that wherever they have appeared they have brought destruction. They are our *bête noire*, and throughout these volumes we have not hesitated to "slate" them as they deserve, for their method of working is a ridiculous mockery of the Fishery Law, which makes a great parade about protecting unclean fish from destruction in the fresh water of the rivers, or by the seine-nets of the estuaries, while it proceeds to stultify itself by sanctioning the destruction of thousands of kelts in these drift-nets, which by their method of working must inevitably kill clean and unclean fish at each drift.

In Scotland all salmon fisheries are Crown property, except where they have been bestowed by charter, and thus there is no right of public salmon-netting. For the same reason we hold that the public rights in Ireland are also vested in the Crown, which has the power, if it chooses to exercise it in the interest of the community, of determining whether it will issue any, or, if any, how many, licences to the public for fishing, and that all public fishings are Crown property unless it can be shown they have been granted by charter to private owners, who, by failing to protect or exercise their rights, have allowed them to drift by lapse of time into public ones.

The snap-net is, fortunately, unknown in Scotland. They are about ten yards long, and are used between two boats, generally flat-bottomed cots, two men being in each, which are kept apart by one man paddling while the other

holds the head- and foot-line of the net. The fish can be felt to strike the net, when a quick and dexterous tightening of the foot-line doubles it up and enfolds the fish. They are very deadly when worked in narrow channels, while if they are numerous hardly a fish can escape them, and they should certainly be abolished from all fresh waters.

As compared with Scotland, it is the further good fortune of Ireland to have no large impassable falls such as exist on the Conon, Spean, and Tummel,[1] which hinder *salmonidæ* from ascending into upwards of a thousand miles of rivers and many thousands of acres of lochs, while, moreover, none of the new anglings that have hitherto been created by the laddering of any Irish falls have been claimed by the Crown in a similar manner as has been done in Scotland.

We write in the firm conviction that good angling will bring more prosperity and more money into a district than good netting, a proposition which has often been proved to be true in Scotland.

Anglers do not expect to come to an Irish river in the spring and to catch each day, for an outlay of a few shillings, say a fish of 16 lb., which it would cost them 40s. to purchase from their fishmonger. Anglers are quite ready to pay for the fish they catch at wholesale price, and to be mulcted in a further round sum for their sport; for they recognise that their ever-increasing number forbids them to hope to rent *good* salmon fishing cheaply.

We feel convinced that in certain rivers the netting profits might be fully maintained, while enormous additional profits could be made by letting the angling under entirely altered conditions.

At present most of our anglings are more or less worth-

[1] The Tummel falls have now been opened.

less, which is caused by the nets working *below* them. Our idea is that in such rivers as permit of it the nets should work *above* the rods. Take the Erne as an illustration of our meaning, and let us suppose that the numbers of the public nets of the estuary were limited to an average of the number that had worked for the last ten years. Then, further, let us imagine that the private nets working below the falls of Assaroe were removed entirely, and that an agreement had been entered into between those private net owners and the owners of the angling rights on the river (which in the case of the Erne would not be necessary, as the nettings and the anglings are in the same hands) to pool the profits and divide them *pro rata*. This all being satisfactorily arranged, then the river should be let out in rods, and netting carried on at the top of the angling beat, which in this case would be just below the Belleek Fish Pass. If that were done, then every fish—and they are counted by thousands—now caught by the nets below the Assaroe Falls would pass unhindered beneath the lures of the rods, when doubtlessly very large numbers would be captured as compared with the total killed at present.

The angling on the four miles between the Assaroe Falls and the Fish Pass at Belleek is at present let at £4 per week per rod, and, speaking from memory, we believe it is limited to eight rods. If, however, we have unwittingly under-estimated their number, then so much the larger will be the profits made on the following basis :—

The Erne rod season begins on the 20th of May and continues to the 30th of September, a period of nineteen weeks, in which there is seldom a vacant rod ticket. Assuming there is no vacancy, then under the present conditions this will produce a yearly sum of £608. Now,

supposing our scheme to be carried out, what would a rod be worth per week under such altered conditions? Well, we think an average of £25 a week is a very reasonable estimate, for where is the angler who could afford it—and there are hundreds who can—who would not give £25 for a week of sport, in which he would be nearly certain to kill from thirty to fifty fish—perhaps many more? Thus, if the cost of the weekly ticket was raised from £4 to £25, we have the angling rent of one river only jumping from the modest sum of £608 to the respectable total of £3800! which estimate is well within the mark, and might easily be surpassed, as under such conditions of fish-plenty the number of rods could probably be increased. Of course the take of the nets at Belleek would be minus the extra numbers of fish caught by the rods; but estimating the total rod catch at 4500 fish over and above the present average catch, yet the great augmentation of the angling rent would more than counterbalance the loss of these 4500 fish to the nets, for even if they were reckoned at 10 lb. each, at 10d. a pound, they would only produce £1870, which would leave a balance of £1930 to the good in favour of the angling, and this is assuming that the rods kept all the fish they caught.

The above scheme is no wild, chimerical idea evolved from the brain of a dreaming angler; all that is needful to carry it out successfully is a combination of the owners of the netting rights with the owners of the angling rights. That there would be "difficulties" in arranging this we fully recognise, but if both parties approached the matter in a spirit of conciliation, and were actuated by a mutual wish to carry it through, we can see no reason why agreements to this effect should not be arrived at. This very

thing has been done with remarkable success in Sweden by a gentleman who, luckily for himself, owned the whole of a river, together with the foreshores for some distance on either side of its mouth. He removed all the nets from foreshore and river, and, arranging to net a pool four miles above the tideway, he fished the intervening distance with fly only. The experiment resulted in extraordinary captures to the rod, while, strange to say, the returns from the net at the top of the angling beat, and the price obtained for the fish, although netted in fresh water, remained the same as when the fish were caught by bag-nets and at the mouth of the river by nets and cobles. We think we are correct in stating that the owner had a record day of over sixty fish of 7 lb. each to his own rod, while during the best months of the season takes of twenty and thirty a day were common events, and we know for a fact that in what was considered the worst month two rods took close on 150.

Had bait as well as fly been permitted, the take would have been nearly doubled, while the average weight would have been largely increased; for it was a peculiarity of the fish of this river that only the small ones would rise to a fly, for the nets above the angling took quantities of salmon ranging from 12 lb. to 40 lb., all of which must have passed under the flies of the anglers.

At the present day the fish-selling angler is not looked upon with favour by his brother-sportsmen. Fifty years ago, the gentlemen who sold game were viewed in much the same light—it was considered *infra dig.* In those days pheasants cost 5s. each in the poulterer's shop; then by degrees stricter preservation, with a better knowledge of hand-rearing, brought about such a vast increase in the number of the pheasants that all preservers had perforce

to sell, and nowadays gentlemen make no secret of the fact that they market their surplus game, and all thought of *infra dig.* has passed away, greatly to the gain of the public, for in November—that month of battues—pheasants are cheaper than chickens, and good fat birds can be bought for 2s. each in all the large towns.

Therefore we should like to see fish-selling anglers as plentiful as game-sellers, always provided that the salmon-selling angler was forced to go to the fishmonger by the same plethora that drives the game preserver to seek the game dealer.

If salmon were as plentiful in the rivers of Ireland as pheasants are in the covers of England, then thither would rich anglers flock in large numbers, when their presence for some months in succession would not only bring much money into poor districts, where it is most urgently needed, but with it also would come a certain amount of civilisation, education, and new ideas; for a gentleman staying in any one spot for a month at a stretch will be nearly sure to have plentiful supplies of newspapers, magazines, etc., all of which will be distributed amongst the natives, who will study them eagerly and discuss them for many a day after their donor has departed.

Also with regard to angling, there is no other sport that can be pursued with so much zest from boyhood to old age, while likewise there is none which gives the faddist a poorer opportunity of raising the cry of cruelty; and then, again, there is no other fresh-water fish, and only the sole and the turbot in the sea, that can hold its own with salmon as a food. Therefore we want to see salmon cheap and plentiful, with many contented anglers on the banks of every stream; for if such a state of affairs could be estab-

lished, then we feel sure that all round the coasts of Ireland, especially on those of the west, we should speedily see happier-looking native faces, from which the angler's money would have driven that sad look of starvation and hopelessness begotten of dire poverty that may unfortunately now be witnessed all too often.

The evils of weirs, water abstraction, and pollution are not nearly so overwhelming in Ireland as they are in England and Scotland, and in our humble opinion the salmon rivers of Ireland are capable of yielding many times more salmon both to the nets and the rods than the united rivers of England and Scotland could possibly be made to produce.

The big Irish rivers are larger than the great ones of Scotland, while many more of the small Irish streams have the advantage of lake sources than have the lesser ones of Scotland; and altogether, the Fishery Law of Ireland, especially in the lengthier weekly close time, is more favourable to salmon production than is the law of Scotland.

If in Ireland drift-nets were declared illegal, or if they were made illegal up to the end of May, so that they could not kill nearly the whole of the descending kelts; if snap-nets were prohibited in fresh water; if a limit was placed on the numbers of the public and private nets, and protection assured to spawning fish—then there is hardly a conceivable limit to the numbers of salmon that the Irish rivers might not be made to yield.

So here's luck, and God bless you, Pat! (though in moments of hasty speech we have not always said so), for, poacher though you are, it is impossible for us anglers to help liking you somewhat; but pray give up killing the

goose that lays the golden eggs, and allow us to like you still better!

A few months ago a fisherman's wife wrote to us as follows in reply to a letter of ours telling her husband we were ill and not able to come to him in February, as had been arranged :—

"Pat has been ill also, but will be ready for you in March. I am sorry to hear you were ill, but we trust in God you will soon be all right again, though he is pleased to know there is to be a chance of seeing you so soon!"

Dear old lady! we hope she is not the only old friend on the wild west coast who will be pleased to see us again so soon, for we look forward with pleasure to other visits in the future, when we hope to find the rivers better stocked, and to renew acquaintance with many kind friends, both gentle and simple. We admit we shall feel a little shy about returning to some few districts, for on first starting in Ireland we speedily found out that as soon as it became known we were visiting a river with the view of writing about it, the tongues of the natives suddenly became so tied that even whisky failed to loosen them. So we changed our name, no matter to what, and pretending to be a tourist angler in search of a little sport and instruction in the gentle art, in this way we found we gathered information more easily, although on one occasion, when attended by a well-informed and loquacious native, it was difficult to keep our secret when suddenly assailed with the question, "Does yer honour happen to know ony wan of the name of Grumble? The boys up the glen say he is coming here to write about the ould river, but divil a worrd will he get from me!"

Up to 1902 grilse were to be found in all the rivers of

Ireland in more or less plenty, though from time immemorial their numbers had ever been liable to fluctuations according to the dryness or wetness of each season ; then in 1905 there commenced a mysterious decrease, and there were very few in comparison to what there used to be—so much so, indeed, that in some rivers there was no run at all.

The scarcity continued until in 1908 nearly every river was short of grilse, notably such rivers as the Shannon, the Suir, the Sligo, and the Moy—four very large ones, famous for the quantity of grilse yielded both to nets and rods. It was also noticed that what few grilse were caught were much below the average size !

In 1909 they practically disappeared from the Waterville district, while in 1910 the rivers of the Blackwater district gave a yield of 45 per cent. below the average of even the last nine poor seasons ! In the Sligo and Ballysadare districts hardly a grilse was taken by net or rod. The Moy catch was 56 per cent. below the average of the last twenty-five seasons.

In 1911 the rivers of the Wexford district only yielded one grilse for every thirty salmon ! The Fishery Board Report of this year contains the remarkable statement that " the members of the Board are inclined to believe that during the last few years salmon are showing a tendency to omit the grilse migration " ! ! It does indeed seem extraordinary that the Board should, in their endeavour to account for the disappearance of grilse, have gone so far out of the way to attempt to elucidate the mystery by suggesting that salmon have suddenly changed those habits which have hitherto been theirs since salmon have existed ! Poor wretched grilse ! The boys and girls of the salmon tribe ! They are simply being exterminated, and

that is the only reason why they "omit" to carry on their natural migration—for where is the animal, reptile, insect, or fish that designedly postpones its progress to maturity!

The grilse are the victims of the murderous drift-nets. It is that fact and that only that accounts for their omissions! In 1911 these damnable nets captured 85,614 fish, with an *average* weight of *six pounds* each! and such an average absolutely must mean an enormous grilse catch. Now, kind readers, follow me a step further, and note for yourselves how the grilse have decreased as the drift-nets have increased.

We have already told how plentiful grilse had been up to 1902, although even then there were three hundred and thirty-nine drift-nets at work.

In 1903 their number was three hundred and seventy-two, an increase of thirty-three.

In 1904 their numbers went up to four hundred and eighty-two, a further increase of one hundred and ten! This increase was chiefly on the west coasts of Donegal and in the Londonderry district. It is related that one boat fishing off Sheephaven took no less than 193 salmon and grilse at one drift! A good illustration of murderous power!

Some of these nets work as far out as twenty miles off the coast. They carry on their work of destruction chiefly by night for four or five hours, or in seas which are thickened by the discharge of flooded and dirty rivers or by a wind disturbance of a muddy bottom. They commence work early in June and continue till about the end of August, which period, everyone knows, corresponded with the height of the grilse run. Each net costs from £20 to £30,

the exact price depending on the length. Few nets are under six hundred yards in length, and many are fully one thousand five hundred yards. I have not been able to ascertain the exact size of the legal mesh, or if the law in this respect is observed by the netters; but there is no doubt that these nets kill any fish of 4 lb. and upwards.

Small wonder, then, that the few grilse that are left to make the migration that the bulk of their brothers and sisters have "omitted" are reported as being "much smaller in size than usual."

In 1905 six hundred and eleven drift-nets were working —a further increase of one hundred and twenty-nine; and in this year for the first time they made their unwelcome appearance—forty of them—on the Galway and Sligo coasts.

In 1906 six hundred and fifty-eight drift-nets worked—an increase of forty-seven.

In this year for the first time the Conservators of the Londonderry district woke up to the destructiveness of these nets, and they passed a by-law prohibiting their use at the entrance to Lough Foyle and within a mile of the mouths of certain adjacent rivers. Thereupon the netters appealed. The wiseacres who heard it gave a verdict for the netters, and thus it has continued until to-day.

1907—the records of this year are not procurable.

1908—five hundred and forty-nine drift-nets, a decrease of nine from 1906.

1909—the numbers of the drift-nets are not procurable.

In this season no less than 84,668 fish were captured by them, the previous highest catch having been 57,589 in 1906. The smallest record, 33,953, was in 1908.

In 1910, from the coasts of Galway round to Portrush,

the drift-nets took 66,274 fish. This take excludes that of the whole east and south and south-west coast up to Galway, therefore the total take of these nets must have been enormous!

1911—seven hundred and nineteen drift-nets.

Let us suppose there was one more net (as there undoubtedly will eventually be), and we will take it that there were seven hundred and twenty nets at work, each with an average length of one thousand yards,—which is well within the mark,—and then we have seven hundred and twenty thousand yards of netting—or over *four hundred* miles of it—crowded into and working on the most likely parts of the coasts for from seventy to eighty days a season at the time of the grilse run! In round numbers, the total mileage of the coasts of Ireland, without following every small indentation closely, is about seven hundred and fifty miles, of which fully one-half is netted. How can salmon increase and multiply under these circumstances?

As regards all the other evils to which salmon are exposed, they are as bad to-day as they were ten years ago.

As to the wanton and wholesale poisoning of fish by flax water in the north of Ireland—in proportion to the offence, the fines are as ludicrously small as when I wrote of them in 1902; often enough the amount is but 1s.! while it rarely, if ever, exceeds 10s. In other parts, where heavier fines are imposed for poaching accompanied by violence, penalties up to £10 are imposed, which on appeal are at once reduced by one-half or even less. This childish system of fine remission as carried on by the Dublin Castle authorities is even still more easily arranged than it was ten years ago. No matter whether Unionists

or Liberals are in office, this foolish remission goes on equally.

Poisonings by spurge or lime, with all the other numerous illegal devices for poaching salmon in and out of season, are also quite as rampant at the present time as they were ten years ago.

In the south and south-west of the country—that district of the fish-poisoner where nearly every man, woman, or child joins in the sport—the good little river Roughty, which falls into the head of Kenmore Bay, was recently poisoned no less than thirteen times in one season. In one case of severe poaching on the Shannon, where there were several previous convictions against the poachers, a fine of £26 was imposed on the gang—on appeal this was reduced to £1! What utter foolery! In five years the Shannon fines amounted to £272. These were reduced by the Lord Lieutenant to £44!

From every river comes the cry of a failing stock of salmon. The proprietors are beaten by the leniency of the Government towards the poachers. They cease their hopeless task of preservation, and look on with the apathy born of despair. Even as I write, the Home-Rulers have passed their Bill through the House of Commons; and if they ever come to rule Ireland, what the future of the Irish rivers will be no one can foretell.

For me it only remains to express an earnest wish, in which all anglers will heartily join, that the ten years that are to come may show an all-round improvement on the ten that have just elapsed.

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